THE CART OF MANY COLORS

NANNINE LAVILLA MEIKLEJOHN

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THE CART OF MANY COLORS: A Story of Italy
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"THE CARRETTO! NELLO'S CARRETTO!"

THE CART OF MANY COLORS

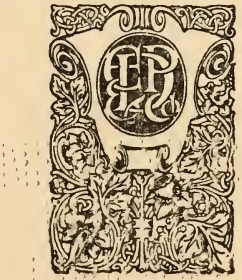
A STORY OF ITALY

BY

NANNINE LaVILLA MEIKLEJOHN

ILLUSTRATED BY

ELIZABETH SHIPPEN GREEN



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TO

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AND

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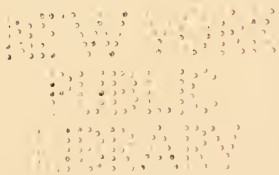

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A LETTER TO THE ONE WHO READS THIS BOOK

Dear Schoolmate:—

There is no need to ask you why we have an Italian story in the Schoolmate Books. I can already hear you saying:

"Because an Italian discovered America,—Christopher Columbus, a Genoese, in 1492. And also because America takes its name from another Italian,—Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine, who followed Columbus across the ocean in 1499."

Yes; you know your lesson very well. These are surely the best of reasons for having an Italian story in our series. But they are not the only ones. Columbus and Vespucci are not the only Italians who ever discovered America. In 1914, before the Great War, one and one-third millions of Italians had discovered our

country, and were scattered all over it, east and west and south and north. There were Italians in the vineyards and orchards of California, there were Italians in the strawberry fields and on the cotton plantations of Louisiana. They were making vegetables grow in New Jersey and New England. They were digging our sewers and subways and building our railroads all over our great United States. They were crowded into our cities in colonies which were themselves like foreign cities set in the midst of our Boston, our New York, our Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis. There were one-third of a million Italians in New York City alone. One-fourth of all the Italians in the country were living in this one American city. Sometimes a whole village would leave Italy and settle in one New York street. And then that street would be transformed, just as if an Italian fairy had touched it with her magic wand; and little Italian shops full of macaroni and polenta and olive oil would spring up in the basements of the tenement houses; and all the

signs over the little shops would be written in Italian words; and all the babies would have dark Italian eyes and shy Italian smiles; and all the people in the street would talk and laugh and sing in Italian; and out of all the doorways would come the smell of Italian cooking. And sometimes, at night, the whole street would be decked and garlanded with little electric lights, red and white and green, to celebrate the birthday of the Italian saint who used to be the guardian spirit of the old village in Italy, and who of course had emigrated with his villagers when they came to the new world.

The Italians are not the only people who get together in groups and colonies in our American cities. The Poles, the Russian Jews, the Germans, the Chinese, all the lonely new immigrants do it. They feel strange and far away from their own lands in this new country, and they want to live next door to some one who understands their language and their old life. But thoughtful Americans are beginning to see that these little patches of Poland, Germany,

Italy, are almost as far from America as if they were still on the other side of the ocean. Daily messages, by cable and wireless, flash between Italy and America, but between Little Italy and Riverside Drive, in New York, there is no wireless; Mars and the Earth are not more far apart in some ways. It is to help old Americans and new Americans to get together and understand each other that little books like this one are written,—old Americans whose grandparents were born here, and new Americans whose children will be born here.

And first, you must know that all Italians are not alike, any more than all Americans are. Indeed, a New Englander and a Southerner are not really so different as a Northern Italian and a Southern Italian. The Italians from the north of Italy have a Teutonic strain of blood in them, sometimes they have blue eyes and light hair; most of these who come to us are skilled workmen from the Northern cities, Milan, Genoa, Turin. The Southern Italians are a shorter, darker race; there are sometimes

traces of the blood of Saracens in their veins; they are farmer-folk, used to working on the land, or they are unskilled laborers; more ignorant, more passionate than their Northern brothers, they are the ones we usually mean when we say those unkind words, Guinny, or Dago, or Wop, for most of the Italians who come to the United States are from Southern Italy and Sicily. In 1910, when a census was taken, there were 192,673 Southern Italians in this country and only 30,780 from Northern Italy. The Italian of the North seems to prefer to go to South America, to Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. But all Italians, whether from South or North, have charming, friendly manners and loyal, loving hearts, and a passionate attachment to their beautiful Italy.

"Then why do they leave their beautiful Italy?" I hear you say. "Why do they come here among strangers when they might stay at home under their own blue skies and in the midst of the memories of their splendid past?" Because Italy is a small country and it has be-

come too crowded. Some one had to move out. And of course, it is the poorer, hungrier people who move. The ones who own land, or shops, and are earning a good living for their families, stay at home, but poor peasants or unskilled workmen who cannot find a job in crowded Italian cities or on crowded Italian farms, turn their faces to the great country across the sea. And when they get here they are very homesick. Americans do not mean to be unkind, but they are busy about their own affairs, and the shy, bewildered foreigner, with very little money in his pocket, is allowed to glean his first ideas of America from fellow-foreigners who know very little more about it than he does.

But Americans are beginning to wake up to the fact that they have not been showing a true hospitality to these newcomers. Especially since the Great War have they seen how unfortunate it is for America to have people living here, and sometimes calling themselves citizens, who yet understand so little about what

it means to be a true American. But even before the war there were people who had waked up. The evening schools were doing what they could to teach Italians English, though it was not much, for Italians are very slow at learning our language, chiefly perhaps because they get so little chance to talk it with Americans who speak it well. The Social Settlements, such as Denison House in Boston, were helping Italians and Americans to be friends with one another. At Hull House in Chicago, there is a Labor Museum where immigrant men and women may go to work at their native handicrafts, and to show the lovely old linens and brasses and potteries which they have brought from the old home. There you may see Italian women weaving linen on Italian looms. And at Denison House there is a Society for foreign handicrafts, to which Italian workers in silver filagree, in leather, in illuminated parchment, bring their work; and hundreds of Italian women earn a little extra money by the filet crochet and the embroidery which they sell

through the Society. These workers have taken as their motto, *"per pane e piacere"*—for bread and pleasure,—and many American women who have never been to Italy, have learned a new respect for their Italian sisters from the embroidered linens made under this pretty motto. The quaint designs for these embroideries are copied from the old Italian patterns of the days when Italy's arts were the glory of the world. The beautiful designs that once decked the table-linen and the furniture of the Medici and the Strozzi, are giving distinction to American rooms and dinner-tables; the fair ladies in Botticelli's pictures and the American girls of our every-day world, have the same delicate needlework on their frocks. Italy is sharing her beauty with the new land of her adoption.

Through Denison House, also, there was started, some years before the War, a Social club for Italians and Americans, which grew so large and flourished so happily that at last it spilled over into one of the large Boston

Halls and held a forum for Italian and American lectures and discussions on all sorts of topics, such as Italian and American history and politics and education and art, by which the two races might learn to understand each other better. And many of the members of the Club became fast friends. I know, for I belonged to the Club, and the friends I made there I have never lost. There is no one more loyal in friendship than an Italian.

And no one knows better how to give you a good time. The evenings when our Circolo (that is the Italian name for Club) met, were among the happiest in the month. No parties I ever went to were ever so pleasant as those. For the Italians have what we call "the social graces." Hospitality and courtesy are second nature to them. Then too, music is in their blood, they sing, they play the piano and the violin; our gay evenings used to echo with the songs of Naples and Venice. And such long memories as they have! Such cantos of Dante or Tasso, such volumes of Leopardi and Car-

ducci as they knew by heart. If American boys and girls can recite "Paul Revere's Ride" or a sonnet of Shakespeare, they think they are doing well; but the young Italians are steeped in their great literature, and not the poetry only; they declaim their Mazzini by the page, when all we can remember of our Lincoln is an epigram or two. And they are natural debaters and orators; an Italian lad of sixteen or seventeen can give a fiery address in Italian which puts to shame the halting, meager English of his American brother. An Italian party is all sparkling with goodwill; everybody is doing his best to make everybody else have a good time; the simple courtesy makes our stiffer, more self-conscious politeness seem cold and heartless. Nowadays, when I go to Boston and meet by chance my old Italian friends on the street, they greet me as if the sight of me had made the day brighter for them; and certainly my glimpse of them has made all the world shinier for me.

Of course, you understand, all the Italians

who came to America cannot recite Mazzini and Dante, cannot play the piano; a great number can neither read nor write; they are suspicious and superstitious because they are ignorant, they are passionate and violent in speech and action because no one has taught them self-control. All the more need is there that we should make friends with them and give them clean, sanitary tenements to live in. A good Italian peasant housewife delights in keeping her house clean; she scrubs and polishes from morning till night; but because in Naples, or on the Italian farm, she threw her slops out of the window and dumped her garbage by the kitchen door, she does the same here; and it is for us to show her how to get rid of these things in the proper American way. How can she know without being told?

We must share our good gifts with one another, Italians and Americans, turn and turn about; we must be willing to learn from one another; above all, we must learn to love and trust one another as friends, if we are to live

in peace together in our great country, as brothers and fellow-citizens should live. And it is for us, who were born here, to make the first advances to the newcomers; to overcome their shyness with friendship, their suspicion with honest dealing, their ignorance with education. This is our duty, as good citizens, toward the immigrants who come to us. But if we do not set them a good example in citizenship, how can we expect them to know what an American citizen should be?

Affectionately yours,

FLORENCE CONVERSE.

THE CART OF MANY COLORS

CHAPTER I

WHY THE CART CAME TO BE

RED and gold! Red and gold! That's what I'll paint it first, Mamma Bice. But what story shall I choose?—Oh!——" Nello's dark eyes flashed and his face was flushed with happy excitement as he danced first on one foot and then on the other before his smiling mother.

"What are you dancing about?" asked his inquisitive small sister, Sarina, running in from the garden and bumping against Nello as he gave another happy bound and landed in the middle of the pepper tree.

"Hush! hush!" interrupted Mamma Beatrice. "It is a secret."

"A secret!" Sarina's eyes grew round and huge with excitement.

"For Mara's wedding," explained her mother.

"Yes! Yes! I am to get a cart from Firazzanu, the cart-maker, and I am going to paint it all myself."

"Mayn't I paint at least a wheel?" Sarina begged.

"Oh, not a *wheel!*" said her brother a bit disdainfully.

Then noticing the tears quickly gathering in young seven-year-old's eyes, he added kindly:

"Well, perhaps you may help. But not a word or a look about it to anyone. If you do!——" The look of fearful threat in his stern face made little Sarina cross herself quickly.

Her mother laughed. "Don't be afraid, Picciriddu (Little One)," she said, bending

down and kissing the child, "you look as though you had seen an 'evil eye,' and Nello is a good brother, isn't he! And you shall help him. Indeed, everyone must help, I think, if we are to get our Mara prettily married so soon, so soon!"

All this was being planned and plotted in the doorway of the Villino Verde, a small house with a garden and an orchard looking out on the beautiful bay of Palermo one morning late in February, in the year 1915. If you wanted to find your way to the Villino Verde, you would either climb into a tram-car, down near the Quattro Canti in the heart of the city, or with a few more pennies, you might do it in a carriage. First they would take you through streets like the Via Maqueda, lined with little shops and gay with bright colored awnings; then through narrower, noisier streets, beyond the public gardens, past the Marina where the band plays every evening. Through the fisherman's "quarter" you would go—and how you

would want to stop to look at the painted boats and their colored sails and at the nets, large and small, lying idle until dark. But you wouldn't stop, I am sure, and up the road you would turn, past flowering orchards of lemons and oranges, almonds and peaches, past cactus trees, figs and *nespoli*—pomegranates too! And at last, quite by itself, quite hidden by a high stone wall, you would reach the Villino Verde. Pull the rope at the iron gate, and only a minute more—and presto! you are inside the wall, in front of the pale green stucco house. Behind you (of course you turn around to see it!), one of the loveliest sights in the world, the City of Palermo—Palermo the Happy, Palermo the Golden Shell, guarded by her purple mountain, Monte Pellegrino, with the tideless waters of the Mediterranean lying like a blue jewel against the white sand on the shore.

The Villino Verde was much like most other Italian houses, the old ones as well as the new. For things change slowly in Italy,

and of all the things that have changed least, perhaps it is the little houses in the country. Always quite square they are, with a large doorway in the middle of the first floor (and the key to this door is often eight inches long and heavy!); big windows, one on either side, and dark blinds opening out so that one may keep out the sun and let in the breeze at night or early morning. During the day, of course, any sensible person keeps these blinds tight shut. This means, you see, that most of the time it is quite, quite warm in Palermo, save for a few sharp and almost bitingly windy days in midwinter. Every house has at least one balcony opening out from an upstairs window, and often two or three. And on these balconies there are always flowers and herbs kept growing—honeysuckle, jasmine and rose and humbler kitchen friends like parsley and fresh mint.

Such a happy, lively family as it was that lived in the Villino Verde! First, there was the Professor himself, the Signor Professore

Benedetto Rossi, a little man with grey hair, snapping black eyes, and the kindliest heart in the world. People in far-off countries as well as in his own beloved Sicily called him one of the greatest scholars of his day. But there in his own home he was just the friendliest of fathers and loved by everyone from Turi, the gardener, to Mumù, the lean black cat that always sat beside him at his desk or table.

Almost more important perhaps than "Babbo Benedetto" was Mamma Bice, for she was a true queen in her household. Indeed, her children often in play would make her crowns of flowers—anemones, white and pink and purple, mixed with myrtle leaves—and they would call her Regina Madre, "Queen Mother," pretending she was a captive princess in exile. For she was not a Sicilian, this Mamma Bice. Sometimes a little far-away look would come into her grey-blue eyes, and then Nello would steal up and surprise her with a kiss on the back

of her neck. "Are you seeing the hills of Tuscany, Mammiddu?" he would ask. She was a Tuscan lady, was Mamma Bice, and like all loyal Tuscans no place could be to her quite so beautiful as her childhood home near Florence. But of course she wasn't really homesick! How could she be, living in such a spot as the Conca d'Oro and surrounded by such a little court of lovers as her husband and her children.

Of these children there were three. Mara, the oldest, was a grey-eyed, blond girl like her mother, just past her eighteenth birthday and betrothed to Angiolo Donati, a young officer in the Italian navy. All Italy was on tiptoe with anxiety in those first months of the great European war, and because the future looked dark and uncertain, Mara's parents had consented to an early marriage for her. She herself was scarcely more excited than her younger brother and sister in the preparations for this great occasion.

"It shall be a truly Sicilian *festa,*" declared Babbo Benedetto.

"With funny cakes and queer old *bibite,*" added Mamma Bice.

"And you will wear laces and chains of gold and coral earrings!" said Sarina a little enviously to Mara.

"And we shall have a procession—garlands and torches," grandly finished up Nello, coming in with a flourish at the end of the joyful plannings.

Nello! Now Nello is the hero of this story and it is high time that I told you about him, isn't it? I think if you had looked hard, you would have found him hiding around the nearest corner—waiting and half expecting to be found. His looks? Was he tall? Rather, for his years. These were just twelve and meant that he was more grown up than if he had been an American or an English boy. He was twelve, and slender and black-eyed, with a laugh always ready and the whitest of large shining teeth, with the nimblest

of legs and slim pointed fingers. The children made fun of his pointed fingers, but Mamma Bice loved them. "They are fingers made for holding a paint brush or for playing sweet tunes on a violin or cello," she would say when Nello was a very little boy. And she was right. For as he grew older, among many things that he liked to do, none did Nello enjoy so much as to flourish a paint brush. Then he would draw great gold dragons or angry black demons or little dainty saints in gem-like colors—figures such as he had seen so often in the Church of Saint Agatha down the road half hidden by the medlar trees. It was old Fra Salvaturi, indeed, who had taught Nello his first lessons in drawing and painting.

Those were, I think, the very happiest moments in Nello's busy boyhood. All in a flurry of impatience he would rush out of the Villino Verde, past the cactus trees, out into the road, and run and run until, breathless, he found himself at the door of the little old, old church. More gently then, he would push to

one side the heavy black curtain hanging straight and stiff. Then he would draw a deep breath before going into the church, so sweet and dim with incense and soft light, on into the Sacristy and to the little tangled garden where Fra Salvaturi was usually to be found. Happy old Fra Salvaturi, trimming the sprigs of rosemary and lavender, or perhaps just quietly "telling" his beads in the cool black shadow of the ivory-yellow wall.

Then he and Nello would go together to the precious wooden chest where Fra Salvaturi kept his paints and his brushes, the bits of old vellum, and the soft pieces of leather. Gently Fra Salvaturi would take down some beautiful missal from the lectern.

"You may copy this," he would say, or better still, "Paint according to your own fancy today." This was for Nello the thing he liked best to do, and once absorbed in the work he would linger on until either hunger or the good Frate himself sent him home. Now and

then Mamma Bice would surprise them and they would look up to find her ready with praise or criticism.

"You are not contented with it, are you, Nelluzzo mio?" she asked him one day as they left the old church and walked slowly home together.

"Contented!" Nello spoke half scornfully, and then he looked up quickly into the quiet, beautiful grey-blue eyes. "I would rather be painting things like you," he explained simply. He adored this slim tall mother of his. "You are like Madonna, Mamma mia—and you are you, too. And I would like to paint real people, real things. I would like to paint Jeli the Fisherman, and his boat with the great red sun on the sail, and Monte Pellegrino in the morning early, and—and——" He paused for breath and felt his mother's cool hands laid on his hot young head. It wasn't only the mass of glossy, dark hair that made it hot. Oh, no, Mamma Bice knew. "You shall study more and better some day—perhaps," she prom-

ised. "Perhaps when Mara goes, you too," she hinted mysteriously.

Nello burned with curiosity to know more. But she put him off with gentle teasing and it was as they stepped inside the iron gateway that led into their garden that Nello had his sudden inspiration for his sister Mara's wedding. He would give her something that would be like a grown-up's toy—a plaything of her very own, something that Mara had always liked so much and had always wanted in vain. How often they had laughed at her fondness for the many-colored carretti of Palermo! She, alas, had always been too high-born to ride in one. "Gentlemen and ladies must ride in carriages and coaches," her old nurse used to say with crushing dignity.

But Mara would soon be able to do just as she pleased. Wasn't she going to be a young married lady? Well! And Mara should have a cart of her very own and he, Nello, none other, would paint the pictures on it and make it the gayest of all gay carts in Palermo,—indeed, in all the world.

CHAPTER II

MAKING THE CART

HOW many gay little painted carts do you suppose there were in the City of Palermo in that spring of 1915? Almost five thousand—at least! And since, like Mara, you, unfortunately, may not go riding out in one, clattering down the Via Maqueda, let me tell you a word or two about those Sicilian carts. Saucy little wagons, they are all made quite alike—just a long wooden box, two huge wheels, 12 or 13 feet around, and two straight shafts. To these shafts is attached the bright harness for the horse or mule or donkey that draws the cart. Swiftest and strongest are the tiny donkeys, not much larger indeed than some rocking-horses. They can go as quickly as the hot sirocco wind which blows over from Africa, and they can also stop so stub-

bornly and so suddenly that you wonder if they will ever move again. Every kind of thing imaginable is piled into these Sicilian carts—great jars of olive oil, wine in straw-covered bottles, sulphur piled high and yellow in the sun, mattresses heaped up and sometimes getting lost on the way, brooms, bundles of fagots, or charcoal, big and black. The pleasantest load one ever sees is a crowd of laughing, jolly people, men, women and children, old and young, often ragged but lively and happy. As many as ten or a dozen pile in and sit on mattresses on the bottom of the cart, or stand inside and outside, off for a holiday.

You would naturally think that these carts were all begun and finished in the same place and by the same maker. But not at all! Nello knew better, and so to Firazzanu, the Cart-maker, he went to order the finest sort of a plain, unpainted cart. Firazzanu lived in a busy piazzetta right in the heart of Palermo. Rather grim and forbidding old houses those

were on the piazzetta. All of them were old and most of them were made of great stone blocks and were several stories high. Firazzanu's shop was in a building that had once been a palace and that still looked rather magnificent, with a loggia on the piano nobile. Above the iron gratings of the balcony were bright-colored flowering plants and all the iron rust had turned to green gold. Like most Palermo houses, the house of Firazzanu was always in either blinding sunlight or black, black shadow.

Firazzanu himself was not wholly unlike his home. For he was a sturdy, wiry little man, whose face was either solemn and grave —when he ordered his apprentices about,—or beaming and brilliant when someone praised his workmanship and made him smile the honestest smile in the world.

The shop spilled all over the ground floor in the great store rooms of the old palace, but most of the work was done in the square stone courtyard. There was an unused fountain in

the center of it, and carts in all stages of making were scattered about and piled up everywhere. Firazzanu's family had made carts for generations before him. Always one son—and often more—would hand on the task to a proud son of his, and so on through several hundred years. From early morning until shortly before noon they would work—Firazzanu and the boys who were assisting him and so learning the trade. After a luncheon of crusty, peasant bread, broken off in chunks from a funny, long, narrow loaf, together with some ripe, black olives, a bit of cheese and a bit of wine, everyone would stretch out in the cool shadow and doze or sleep until late afternoon.

Nello had long loved to go and stand in the shadow of the great open door and watch Firazzanu put the finishing touches on the carts. The sound of the hammering and the sawing and the pleasant clean smell of the wood were always a delight to the boy. And he never could quite understand how Firaz-

zanu could do what every good cart-maker in Palermo must be able to do—make a different sound for each wheel as it turns, to suit the driver who is going to use it.

"They almost play real tunes," Nello would say to Mamma Bice. "They go up—so!" he would say with a shrill little shriek, "and down so!" with a low and solemn groan. "Mine is to be like this," and Nello made a cheerful, whirring, purring sort of sound that made them both laugh. These secrets he confided to her as they were starting off one morning to see the cart, which was about finished. Nello had been in a state of feverish anxiety for fear that it would be quite too late for the wedding. But old Firazzanu had hurried for perhaps the first and only time in his life, and at last they set out, Nello and Sarina and old Lola, the nurse, trudging along and chattering all the way. You might have thought they were quarreling but it was only just excitedly happy talk.

"It looks like a ghost of a cart, doesn't it?"

said Nello to Gino, the chief apprentice, who was stroking the unpainted shafts as though they were the paws of some giant pet.

"I want to get in! I want to get in!" clamored Sarina, on tiptoe with eagerness.

"Lift the Signorina up!" ordered Lola, quite majestically.

Gino took Sarina and swung her down into the bottom of the cart. In a second, Nello had climbed up and was sitting in the driver's seat, holding imaginary reins and laughing his approval to Firazzanu. Everyone beamed with pleasure and pride. It was a fine cart and worthy of the occasion.

"See!" said Gino, "Here is my donkey all ready to be hitched up so that you may take it at once to Nuncio, the Varnisher."

"And," added Firazzanu, "he will paint it yellow all over—he does it better than anyone else. He has the real secret, Nuncio has, and knows how to put on the paint so that the cart will be brighter than gold."

"And then!" shouted Nello, flourishing an

imaginary paint brush in the air, "And then I shall make kings and queens on it."

"And griffins," interrupted Sarina.

"And you will fall out," objected Lola severely, rescuing her darling as she was about to jump down off the high wheel.

"Will the Signorino and the Signorina not ride with Gino to Nuncio's?" asked Firazzanu politely.

"Oh, Lola! Yes! Yes!" begged the two children.

Lola winked at Firazzanu. This surprise was not wholly a surprise to her and to the Cartmaker.

"Gino can drive them quite safely," said Firazzanu.

"As gently as the dove of Noah," said Gino gravely.

"Well, then, up you go again," assented Lola, speaking this time more in gesture than in words. For in Sicily whole talks can go on with never a sound to be heard. You raise your eyebrows one way and it means this. You

drop the corner of your mouth another way and it means that. Whole disputes have been begun and ended without a word spoken aloud, and any day you may see on the street, two men or three, stopping half way across, to go through a real dumb play that tells anything from awful threats to kisses of peace and forgiving. Of course this is a very convenient thing as you grow old. For what does it matter if you become deaf? Only, be sure to keep your eyesight!

With Sarina on Lola's lap and Nello sharing the reins with Gino, they clattered off down the street, going by all the back alleys and the lonesomest ways they could find.

"I don't believe anyone ever rode before in an unpainted cart, do you?" asked Nello of Gino.

"Probably not—but possibly yes," said Gino gravely.

Nuncio, the "Varnisher," lived quite a long way off, on the water front just before you came to the fisherman's quarter where Nello

had often lingered chatting with the old, bronzed "salts." A poor enough life they led, those fisherfolk, so far as concerned their houses, which were bare and plain and furnished with next to nothing; and a life rather hard and dreary if you didn't fancy fishing all night long, and then hurrying in, on foot, to sell your fish at the very crack of dawn. But Nello had never heard one of them grumble, and he had made up his mind that on the whole they liked it and he would, too—fishing by starlight in a boat with the fisherman's saints Cosimo and Damian painted on one end and the Archangel Michael on the other. Mending the great nets was wonderful, too, and never to be done in a hurry.

"Jeli was once a coral fisher," said Nello to Sarina, "and his brother used to sift sea salt over at Trapani—salt as hard and white as diamonds."

"I would rather get coral," Sarina said, sniffing the salt air with relish, and nibbling

some roasted melon seeds that Lola had handed her tied up in a scarlet handkerchief.

"I have a surprise for you—perhaps!" said Lola winking at Gino.

"Oh, what is it, what is it?"

"We are here—almost." Gino pointed to Nuncio's sign, a fine yellow one with scarlet letters and the Trinacria, emblem of three-pointed Sicily, over the doorway.

"I know, I know!" guessed Nello. "Dinner at Jeli's—maybe."

"Maybe," said Lola.

Sarina hugged her. Then she hugged Nello. She almost hugged Gino and the donkey.

A dinner at Jeli's! Poor though he was, Jeli could make a dinner fit for the Signor Professore's children, as they had learned long ago. A dinner there meant things that not only tasted wonderful but looked like fairy food, too. Little fishes like gold fish fried in sizzling oil and served on a great green leaf; then, fresh white almonds, maybe; some seasonable fruit, hard bread and good salt cheese.

Sarina's mouth watered as she thought of it.

Nello was talking in a very businesslike way to Nuncio. "Yellow all over, just as you always do, but the nicest yellow you ever did! And—yes, yes, you may do a few other touches,—red of course, but not this—or this—" Nello could hardly help feeling quite important and excited.

"Leave it at Jeli, the Fisherman's," he continued.

"Si, Signorino, si, si!" Nuncio bowed and vowed he could be counted on.

"Absolutely it must be done in eight days," Nello concluded.

"In eight days, may Santa Rosalìa strike me dumb if I don't! And if Saint Michael grant us weather fair enough for drying, you shall not be disappointed, Signorino."

So they left the cart and gave a few soldi to Gino, and this time Sarina did really hug the donkey before Gino got astride it to ride it back home to the shop. Then the two children and Lola walked slowly up the narrow street

by the sea to Jeli the Fisherman's small yellow house by the shore. Lemon and orange groves stretched up behind them and right next to the little orchard of olives a field was blue and white with violets and great narcissi. There in the shadow of a tiny pergola, a little stone table awaited them, three stone stools and a wonderful smell of frying. Daffodils grew around the rocks and seemed indeed sometimes to grow out of them. A few yards away the Mediterranean touched the bright sand in little lapping waves and, protectingly near, Monte Pellegrino rose like a magic mountain in the golden haze of noon.

"It was the best dinner I ever ate," sighed sleepy Sarina, as she cuddled comfortably into Lola's lap after the last crumb was gone.

"It was a good dinner," agreed Nello. He was a little sleepy, too, but too proud to admit it. He stretched himself out on the old bench in the shadow of a medlar tree.

"Now," he said, "now, Jeli, tell us a story."

And there as he mended his fish-net, Jeli the

Fisherman sat on the ground, his sunburnt legs and arms looking like real bronze, and his blue eyes like bits of the sea before them, so deep, so shining, so clear. His thick brown-grey hair and beard, Sarina often insisted, "are like parts of a tree—a very old tree—so scraggly and stiff." But his voice was a very gentle voice. One could forget yesterday and tomorrow as one listened to him. Nello thought it must be because he had seen so many sea magics. But old Lola said it was just the sea air.

Sea air or sea magic, something had made Jeli a wonderful story teller, and today he wove them a real netful of coral—queens and sea-serpents and shivery ghosts of the ocean. When he had finished, not a bit did he care that they were all sound asleep, from Lola and rosy Sarina to Nello who lay there dreaming of a cart which could ride the waves and even ride through the air.

CHAPTER III

A TUSCAN STORY

MARA sat busily sewing one afternoon out in the shadow of the high stone wall.

"You have to stitch and stitch to be ready, don't you?" said Sarina gravely biting off a date from the sprig she held in her hand. "One gone, another gone. I wish I had more!" she said with her mouth full and her fingers blissfully sticky.

"Little greedy!" laughed Mara. "Where," she added teasingly, "where does Nello go every day? He says he is doing some work, but what on earth can it be? You don't know, do you?"

Sarina's eyes looked bursting with information but she clapped her hands over her mouth.

"I won't let it come out! I won't tell," she groaned to herself. Aloud, she said:

"Punch me and prick me and see if I tell,
But if I should bite you, 'twould serve you well."

Mara gave her a gentle poke in the ribs.

"I won't punch you, little sister, or prick you or bite you. But I really would like to know."

Just then they heard a happy shout coming from the road, and Nello, giving three leaps each higher than the other, sprang through the open gate and flung himself down, hatless and coatless, at Mara's feet. Mamma Bice came quietly up behind him with a skein of bright colored silk in her hand.

"This is the right color, isn't it?" she asked Mara, laying it beside the bit of embroidery the girl was doing.

"Yes, perfectly," said Mara, "now I can finish it," and she kissed her mother's fingers gratefully.

"What a hot boy!" Mamma Bice exclaimed,

looking half reprovingly at Nello. "You shouldn't, you shouldn't run so up the road."

"I didn't mean to,—but I just couldn't help it. And you know you promised to tell me a story if I came home before so very late."

"So I did," said Mamma Bice.

"You tell better stories than Je——," Sarina began and stopped in terror.

"Than Lola?" said Mamma Bice tactfully, drawing Sarina close to her.

Nello looked daggers at Sarina but said nothing.

"What story shall I tell?" asked their mother, then added, "The skein of silk answers that, doesn't it?"

"Yes, yes! Let's have the one about Fiammetta,—Fiammetta and her Fairy Fate," said Nello, "that is one of the nicest of all."

"And where shall the story be this time," asked Mamma Bice. "Shall it be dressed in Grecian clothes or shall it be a Persian story, —or with your own Sicily for background?"

For Mamma Bice had a wonderful way of telling the same story over and over again.

"It is the same story and yet not the same. The same things happen, but the people—they feel different, don't they!" Nello used to say. Today, he answered his mother's question with one of his own.

"You called her Fiammetta, didn't you, Mammiddu?"

Mamma Bice nodded "yes."

"Well, then, that means Tuscany today, for that is where she always is when her name is Fiammetta."

"A Tuscan story it shall be—at least more Tuscan than anything else, for fairy stories really belong to no place or time but to the——"

"Land of dreams and the Moon," said Sarina; "please begin, Mammiddu."

And so Mamma Bice told the story of Fiammetta and her Fate, there in the garden in Sicily. And there were flowers of all kinds making the air sweet. But the sweetest thing

in the garden, Nello thought, and Mara and Sarina, was Mamma Bice's voice.

"Once there lived a merchant who had many ships and one child, a daughter named Fiammetta. Not even the prince who ruled that country possessed more gold or greater wealth than this powerful merchant. A long, long avenue of low steps led up to his beautiful palazzo, and on either side of the stairway were tall pointed cypress trees that looked almost black against the Tuscan sky.

"Far and wide stretched the land belonging to this merchant and many were those who served him. Oil they made from his terraced olive orchards, and wine from the garlanded vineyards; they gathered grain from the fields where poppies and iris flowers grew between the wheat. Oh, he was very prosperous! But his greatest joy was his little, motherless girl, Fiammetta. Wonderful gifts her father gave her, rare jewels made by cunning goldsmiths, beautiful clothes, and best of all, a garden with many fountains, pools of quiet water, and

near them shady grottoes where birds sang and in the sunlight or the shadow of ilex trees azaleas grew, and pink and white oleanders, with slender yellow jasmine blossoms for crowning Fiammetta.

"The country folk who came to the palazzo on this errand or that would carry away with them great stories of the splendid things they had seen; of the tall torches blazing at night on either side of the palace doorway, and how often early in the morning one would hear the baying of many dogs in the courtyard; and how on wonderful horses from Arabia a gay cavalcade would go out to hunt and to roam the countryside. They said Fiammetta ate only the finest food—white bread and delicate bits of meat.

"As she grew older, she seemed singularly rightly named, not only because of her long, soft hair as red-gold as a flame, but also because of her lively, leaping spirit and quick, happy ways. These pretty ways made her father's contadini like to bring her gifts from

the farms and the forests—chestnuts in the autumn, great cherries and pointed wild strawberries in early summertime,——"

"Did she like pomegranates?" interrupted Sarina. "I don't."

"I rather think Fiammetta did, for they are so beautiful to look at, even if you don't quite enjoy the taste."

"One day, when she was quite alone in her great, tall, quiet bedroom,"——

"Tell us about it, please," begged Nello.

Mamma Bice smiled. "With words for painting it?" she asked.

"It was a great quiet room, as I said, with a ceiling painted blue like the evening sky and small gold stars dotted over it. The walls were of stone, and high on two sides were deep-set pointed windows. The room was quite plain and cool and grey and had not very much in it. A shining brass lamp hung on the wall; at one side was Fiammetta's high little bed, and near the window two stiff, tall chairs, each with a footstool in front of it. (Fiam-

metta sat on the footstools, not on the chairs!) At one side of the bed was a very precious and beautiful picture of the Virgin with two slim wax tapers burning before it, and on the shelf beneath it a little bowl that Fiammetta always kept filled with small fresh flowers.

"Now one day she was just about to change the flowers in the silver bowl when the door behind her opened suddenly. Fiammetta turned and saw standing there a lady strangely tall and strangely beautiful. The child was so startled that the violets in her hand fell to the marble floor.

" 'Do not be afraid,' said the strange, smiling lady.

" 'Oh, who are you?' asked Fiammetta. She wanted to run away but knew she could not while she felt those eyes fixed on her and keeping her there quite as though she were a prisoner.

" 'Who am I?' said the lady. 'Fiammetta, look at me well, for I am your fate, your fairy fate, Orlinda. See!' and she held up in her

hand a small and shining wheel whose spokes were made of jewels and whose outer rim was gold. Fiammetta looked, fascinated, at the wheel. 'And what is that for?' she asked softly.

" 'For your fate, Fiammetta. Will you be happy now while you are young, or will you in old age be happy,—for you cannot be both, it seems.'

"Poor Fiammetta! Here was a hard choice, and she so quite alone and with no one to advise. She thought for a few minutes, and then—which do you think she chose?"

"We know, don't we?" said Sarina.

" 'I will be happy when I am old,' she said to her Fate, 'for I have heard that one can bear suffering better when one is young.'

"The Fairy Orlinda raised the golden wheel, and in the sun that filtered through the deep-set window she turned it once, and without another word she opened the door and was gone.

"Then began a sorry change in the life in that gay palazzo. Hardly had one day gone

I·AM·YOVR·FATE·YOVR·FAIRY·FATE· ORLINDA·

by when one of the merchant's ships was lost. Then another, and another. And indeed in less time than one could imagine he became so poor that he was obliged to sell his beautiful palace, and not long after he died of shame and grief. Like one in an evil dream, Fiammetta found herself a beggar. Live she must, though she hardly knew how. But her name gave her courage. Was she not a 'flame' —though only a very little one? And must she not keep bright and burning? She would go out into the world and see what she could do towards earning a home and food. Black bread would do now, she decided.

And so, because she was pitiful and pretty, this one and that one took her on to the next town. There, where she could more easily forget her pride in the midst of strangers, she stood one fine spring morning in the busy market place. Great piles of gay colored fruits and vegetables made bright splashes against the grey stone buildings all about her. Merry voices chattered and bargained, and in

the crowd she felt suddenly alone. But as she stood there, one of the great ladies of the town came near her, and when Fiammetta timidly summoned her courage to speak, the lady listened not unkindly.

"'You wish to be my maid-servant?' she asked Fiammetta. 'Come, then, with me.' 'I might perhaps do more,' she thought, touched by the eager look in Fiammetta's sad and gentle face.

"All went beautifully for a short time and Fiammetta found herself kindly cared for and more contented with her lot than she had thought she could be. But one day something happened.

"'I must leave you alone,' said her mistress to Fiammetta, 'and so I shall lock you in.' And she turned the key on the outside of the door. Poor Fiammetta thought how bitter it was to be a servant and not to be trusted. As if she would have stolen and then run away—unless locked in! Hardly had her mistress gone when a quick step behind her made Fiammetta

turn to see there in the doorway the Fata Orlinda. Without a word but in a fury and a rage, the Fate snatched a piece of linen from Fiammetta's hands and tore it into bits. She tore the curtains at the windows, the clothes in the wardrobes, and the linen in the cassoni. In an unbelievably short time it seemed as though the whole house was in pieces. Fiammetta looked on in dumb dismay. Suddenly, she spied the door standing a little ajar. Quick as a flash she fled. Never could she face her mistress again. On and on she sped, through back ways, down streets of steps and out to the countryside. There, worn out, she dropped by a wayside shrine and slept and slept. Back in her mistress's house meanwhile the Fairy Orlinda drew from her silken pocket a little swinging censer. She waved this once—twice—three times, and presto! Every piece that had been torn or hurt was as whole as ever and back in its own right place. This done she vanished from the house as suddenly and mysteriously as she had come.

"Meanwhile, poor Fiammetta sought to better her fortune in another city, and again she soon obtained a position with a great and kindly lady, and again the same thing happened. Whenever she had just begun to feel she had at last found a home and a shelter to live in, suddenly the Fairy Orlinda would appear and with quick and dreadful destruction frighten the girl so that she fled in terror before she had to bear the blame; and always as soon as she had gone, presto! the Fairy Orlinda would make everything right again. From city to city she wandered, to cities set high on hills, to castles with towers and battlements, and from these high places down to towns by the sea, and to little villages even in valleys between the rivers Fiammetta went and went, and for seven years she sought peace and a place where she might stay. But always in vain.

"At length she came to a certain fair city, with countless high towers rising above its great thick wall. Many bells rang often in its

square belfries, and all the way up from the valley there were vineyards between low trees and olive orchards laid out in trim long rows, with their leaves looking like shining little lances in the sunlight. Fiammetta slipped in through one of the gates of the city and saw leaning over a balcony a lady kind and curious.

"'Oh, Gentilissima,' said Fiammetta, 'have you no work that I can do? I can sew and I can braid my lady's soft black hair. Oh, I can do many useful, pleasant things!'

"'Well and well,' said the lady, thinking it over. 'Some good may come of this for you and for me. But—no more, unless you promise me to do this. You see yonder hilltop towards the sea? On that hilltop you must every day carry up to my Fate, the Fairy Armanda, a great wooden board covered with small loaves of fresh, white bread.'

"This seemed to Fiammetta not too hard a thing to do, so she consented, and to her great surprise found this time that apparently her

Fate had decided to leave her longer in peace. The days passed into weeks and the weeks to months and months, and could she but have forgotten that she was indeed as high born as her mistress and should have been one to be waited on and not a poor and humble servant, Fiammetta would have been almost happy.

"One day, towards sundown, her mistress came upon Fiammetta and found her weeping bitterly. She stroked the girl's soft, flame-gold hair and spoke to her so kindly that Fiammetta then and there told her all her story.

" 'Who knows,' said her mistress, as Fiammetta concluded, 'but that my Fate, the Fairy Armanda, would persuade your Fate to pursue you no longer but promise you an end to your fear and misery?'

"So the next day at dusk, when Fiammetta gave the fresh, sweet bread to the Fairy Armanda, she said to her, 'O, gracious Fairy Armanda, take me, I pray you, to my Fairy Fate, that I may beg her to trouble me no more.'

"The Fairy Armanda looked at Fiammetta not unkindly, but only said:

"'Your Fate, unhappily, lies ill and sleeping. She is covered with seven coverlets of velvet, of silk, and of cloth-of-gold. She could not hear you even if you spoke to her. But I will awaken her and will help you if I can!'

"That very night, the Fairy Armanda cast a spell upon her sister and spoke to her in such a way that Orlinda arose and slowly shook off the seven coverlets. Then she took from a little silver box a small skein of silk. 'Take this,' she said, handing it to the Fairy Armanda; 'it may be of use to the girl.' Then off she dropped to sleep again, covered by the seven coverlets.

"Fiammetta hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry when she received the bit of silk, but she carefully tied it up in her best apron and wondered what use she ever would make of it. Not long after this there was heard all through the town a great ringing of bells, and

up the narrow streets and down again went criers in scarlet clothes and blowing on their horns to tell the people that their King was about to be married. Such busy and planning days as followed! And all the King's tailors tried to outdo one another in making him garments fit for a royal bridegroom. Only one robe remained to be done, and this was to be the costliest and the most beautiful of all. But when the tailor tried to match the silk with which he was to sew the royal garment, not a speck or a particle could he find to go with the fine material. Greatly distressed, he begged for permission to exhibit the gorgeous cloth. For seven days and seven nights it hung from a great iron chair out in the covered loggia of the public square. Lords and ladies sent their servants, hoping to match the stuff with some treasured silken thread spun, perhaps, in days long since gone by. The girls who came to fill their bright copper water jugs at the beautiful 'Joyous Fountain'—Fonte Gaia—they too, though poor,

were gay and saucy and tried their bits of thread. 'One might get a reward,' they said. 'All may try, even the beggars, says the King.' But no one had the right color. On the seventh day Fiammetta's mistress walked up the steps of the loggia and carefully examined the cloth which looked now bright in the sun, now blacker than black in the shadow.

" 'Surely,' she said to herself, 'surely I have seen that color. And where?—But it is that which her Fate gave to Fiammetta, the very same!'

"She lost no time, and hurrying back bade Fiammetta to array herself in her best and prettiest attire. 'Then go,' she said, 'and show your skein of silk to the King and to his tailor.'

"Fiammetta, all in a happy flutter, put on her flowered apron, and over her flame-gold hair folded a blue silk kerchief all wrought with strange and lovely designs in black and gold. In her ears she fastened gold earrings, and a golden chain which her mistress

had given her hung about her slender white neck. She looked, indeed, so lovely and so sweet that when the young King saw her he could only stare and stare and be quite silent, staring. They held her skein of silk up beside the wonderful fabric, and lo and behold! it was a perfect match! The King's joy was even greater than the tailor's. 'Bring forth the royal scales,' he said to the Lord of the Treasure House.

" 'And,' interrupted the Lord of the Treasure House, 'we will give the maiden as much gold as will balance her fair skein of silk.'

"So they brought before the King and Fiammetta and the assembled court the royal scales and on the one side laid the silken skein and on the other a fiorino (florin) of pure gold. But to everyone's amazement, not one least little bit did the scales change. The Lord of the Treasury frowned and from the royal coffer threw in another florin, then another, and more and more, until the excited and buzzing court saw all the treasure of the realm heaped up in vain

to match the skein of silk. Fiammetta stood like a statue, her little lips parted half in terror, half in mere amazement. And the King sat and looked and looked at her. When the last florin had been thrown in to no avail, he took his crown from his head and placed it on top of the gold of the realm, and presto! skein and all made a perfect balance. Fiammetta, her hands clasped in fright, stepped back and hardly heard the King's voice speaking to her.

"'Where, O maiden, did you find this priceless treasure?'

"For an instant she was too frightened to reply and then she began hesitatingly, 'My kind mistress——'

"'Stop!' commanded the King, all of a sudden quite stern and looking at her as though he would pierce the truth out of her. 'Tell me the truth or——'

"Fiammetta needed no further threats. She dropped on her knees and in her soft, gentle voice told the King all her story. When she had finished the King rose and beckoned to the

old Queen, his mother. 'What,' he asked her, 'is the meaning of all this mystery? Why should all my treasure, my crown even, be needed to equal the weight of a skein of silk?'

" 'Why, pray,' said the Queen Mother, somewhat impatiently, 'but because the maiden herself is destined to wear a crown and to be herself a queen!'

"Then the King lifted Fiammetta gently up beside him and as he put the crown upon her head,

" 'This, then, is the only crown she shall wear,' he announced. And as the people looked on her they knew that she only must be destined to be their queen, for was not her hair the color of the crown and were not both like gold flames and as beautiful as the light?"

"And what," asked Sarina, as she always did, "what became of the poor betrothed?"

"Oh," said Mamma Bice, "she had never really wanted to wed this King—our King—and when he sent her away laden with gifts and treasures, she straightway married a prince of

her own choosing and everyone was happy forever and ever and ever." And as she said the last words, Nello put on Mamma Bice's head a garland of yellow roses.

CHAPTER IV

THE WEDDING DAY

"WILL it never really come!" Sarina had sighed, for what seemed to her numberless bedtimes, as Lola helped her to undress.

"How the days have flown!" thought Mamma Bice and Babbo Beppo. "Can it really, really be so near!"

And here at last it was—the very day of the wedding, and everybody fairly tumbling over everybody else in pleasant preparations and excitements.

"Was there ever such a hurrying and flurrying and scurrying!" said Turi to Gna Cicca, the cook, sitting down on the only empty spot in the kitchen.

Gna Cicca grunted. It was a grunt of pleasure. She also sniffed at the spices she was

putting into the thick black soup on the stove.

"Haven't I been baking and roasting and never sleeping once the whole night—and last night, too?" Turi took a gulp of coffee from the old copper coffee jug Gna Cicca held out to him. "There!" she said. "It's all you can have now. Fast now, feast later!"

"You aren't the only one who doesn't waste time sleeping," put in Lola as she came into the kitchen. "The Signora Bice and the Signor Professore! Like two owls they are! I'm sure they don't know the moon from the sun these days! But, holy Saints! The Signorina must be properly married, and there'll be time enough for resting when she's gone."

Turi looked suspiciously at Lola's old eyes. They were all very fond of sweet young Mara, these three who had served her mother long and well.

"Are the children still asleep?" asked Gna Cicca, stirring the black soup with a huge iron spoon.

"They are shut up in the dark," said Lola,

"and may they sleep as long as—as long as——" and here she stretched out both arms as far as she could. "Heavens!" she continued, "Such jumpings up and down and up again! She's as wild as the child of a brigand, is Sarina! It's a gypsy dress she should be wearing today, not velvet and gold!"

One after another the vendors that regularly passed by the Villino Verde on their way into the City called out their wares and shouted good mornings and good wishes to the kitchen of the Villino. First came Vannuzzo, who sold the white sand that Gna Cicca used for polishing up the copper cooking utensils. Vannuzzo always called out the beauty of his sand in deep, agonized groans. You would have thought to hear him that some terrible disaster had befallen him. Quite wrongly. He was merely saying how white, how purer than snow was his sand. After him, as usual, came Minu, selling little bunches of herbs, mostly the Sicilian cook's favorite "basilicù." "Only a little penny, a centesimino, for a bunch. O what

fresh basilicù! Buy! O buy my basilicù!" All of which Minu would chant in a high, shrill, whistling sort of voice. On this day of days quite a procession of flower vendors chose to take the road to town passing by the Villino Verde.

"It's a blessing that the Signorino Nello's still asleep," said Lola, shoving off the ninth or tenth tempter from the garden gate. "He'd never have a penny left after all this amount of temptation."

"Go away, go away!" she told a laughing-eyed country boy who was cheerfully staggering under the weight of his basket, heaped high with bunches of dew-fresh country flowers, prettily arranged on sticks of different heights. "Don't you see we have a garden? Are you blind? Am I dumb?" continued Lola.

"Far from it! Never! But I do not see pomegranate blossoms or azaleas like mine—or poppies like these——"

Lola held up her hands in disgust. "Do you

think we want to sleep—go away with your poppies! We have flowers enough."

And so they kept noisily passing by, one street vendor after another, while Nello slept and slept. Greatly to his chagrin, the first thing he heard was the teasing voice of Sarina. Next, he saw her, or only half saw her, dancing about his bed and calling him scornful names in a truly Sicilian way.

"Get up! Get up! You snail, you sluggard, you dreaming son of a turtle!" she taunted, poking him disrespectfully in the ribs. By this time Nello was sitting up and rubbing his eyelids.

"I *was* dreaming," he confessed; "dreaming that the Carretto was in the bed and riding over me." Then suddenly he shouted for joy. "Why! It's Mara's wedding day! Skip, skip, Sarina! I shall be late! The Cart will be late! Go, go and tell Turi to remember to get the Cart here! Everything must be ready at exactly thirteen o'clock."

What a day of days it really was for the

Villino Verde, and how all the world looked somehow as though it had decked itself in its best for the happy, festive occasion!

"I didn't know there were so many aunts and uncles and cousins and godparents and friends in the world," said Nello to Lola as she helped him into his quite wonderful costume.

"You look almost like a little prince. Be sure you act like one," advised Lola.

"Don't you like my blue silk stockings, Lola?" asked Nello, preferring to change the subject.

"I like your velvet jacket and the embroidery on your vest. Well enough done, it is—very nice little flowers and——"

"O Nello, how many rows of gold buttons have you?" exclaimed Sarina admiringly, running in and almost tripping over her long scarlet silk robe.

"Careful, careful, Signorina! You can't play at being a Princess and leap like the daughter of a shepherd!"

Nello clapped his hands with approval.

"Sarina! You are quite, quite——! I think your dress is even prettier than mine." And indeed the little girl was quite like a runaway princess as she stood before him, counting his gold buttons and quite properly appreciating his turquoise velvet finery.

"I have on the real colors of Palermo, haven't I?" and Sarina patted her scarlet silk gown, which tripped her up delightfully with every step. "Mara laced me up! And see my silver belt—and the buckle. It looks gold—doesn't it—some of the flowers, but they're only gilded, Mamma says."

"Aren't your sleeves nice!" admired Nello; "all embroidered with gold!"

"And my cuffs are too! See the gold threads in the lace," added Sarina, pausing to stroke the cat and pointing out the bell hanging under its ribbon collar.

"Such extravagance, but a worthy event, truly," grumbled Lola, a little scornfully. "Think of your wearing that precious linen

vest and those sleeves. They might better have been for the sposina!"

"Oh, well, Lola," said Nello, pacifying the old nurse with a hug, "Mara has three cassoni full of linen, and hasn't she the wonderful old linen coverlet you gave her—your great, great ——"

"Great fiddlesticks!" interrupted Lola, pretending to be indifferent, but beaming all over with pride and pleasure.

"Mamma says that no one can give her anything more beautiful than that." And with this both children made a deep curtsey and bowed themselves out of the room.

So began a day packed full to the brim with excitement and thrills. Good things to eat and sweet odors to smell, happy voices and happy faces. Sarina and Nello kept running about giving information about this thing and that and quite bursting with importance.

"Mara has taken off her betrothal ribbon," shouted Nello from the balcony shortly before noon.

"The procession is getting ready," shouted back Sarina from the bank of great iris flowers that Angiolo had sent to make a bower in the garden. And if you could have done what Sarina would have liked to do, had it not been for her finery, you would have climbed up on top of the wall to see the little procession that was awaiting the bride to strew roses on her path and to hold over her head the waving, fluttering branches of laurel and orange blossoms which should bring her good fortune on her wedding day.

"See, see!" said Sarina, explaining to a young stranger cousin who had followed her to an opening in the wall from which they could peer through. "They are the little orphan children that Mara used to go to see. I am going to see them now and take them oranges, perhaps, so they will make a procession for me when I am married!"

There, to be sure, they were—kept in order by the gently busy nuns, four or eight of them, in their spotless best for the festal day, and

very proud of their little flock. And well they might be! For a prettier sight it would have been hard to find. First a double line of angels, and then a row of saints in darker robes, and then twelve little apostles in purples, blues and blacks.

"They copied them from the Cappella Palatina," said Nello knowingly, and just then the bells of the nearby church began to ring and ring and ring.

Mamma Bice and Babbo Beppo looked at Mara and then at each other, and then looked down towards the road where Angiolo, the bridegroom, had already gone on to be ready to meet them at the church. And neither quite dared to admit to the other how the sight of Angiolo's uniform and of his merry young friends cast on the party the only shadow of the day. What if Italy should be drawn into this great, great War! Mamma Bice felt a funny little tightening of her heart. But the day was too bright, the hours were too full, and Mara and Angiolo were too young and light-

hearted for fear and worry really to enter into anyone's heart.

"I want to walk to my wedding," Mara had declared.

"Like any contadina?" her father had teased.

"Like myself!" said Mara, and settled it.

And so they had lined the roadway with pots of daffodils and other plants, and the little procession of singing children had made the road sweet with roses, pink and yellow and white, for her satin shod little feet to walk on.

"I think she looks like Fiammetta," whispered Nello to Sarina as they stepped behind her, he to be her page and hold up her long, shining bridal train.

Into the little church they filed, the small angels and saints and apostles kneeling on either side and making of themselves and their branches a bower for the bride to walk under on her way to the altar and to Angiolo. Nello knew he would never forget that picture—the flickering candles on the altar, the festoons and clusters of flowers, the drifting incense smoke,

and Angiolo waiting, slim and gallant in his uniform. But most of all he would remember Mara, Mara who was so like a jasmine flower, floating rather than walking, he thought, up to the altar.

But for Nello all this was perhaps only a background to the Real Event of the day. As Mara on Angiolo's arm came back down the aisle, and relatives and friends and peasants crowded about them on the steps leading down to the road, a gay sound of bells and of little pattering hoofs was heard drawing near. There was a pause of expectancy, and then a shout went up as around the turn in the road came—The Carretto! Nello's Carretto! And hers, Mara's! Laden with flowers it was, garlanded with ribbons and branches of vines, shining with color and all gay and gorgeous. None other than Nello was the driver, standing up in the driver's place and holding the sparkling reins.

"What is it, what is it?" asked Mara, truly surprised and bewildered.

"What *is* it!" laughed her father.

"It is for you!" shouted Nello, jumping down and tossing the reins to Angiolo. "I did it, Mara, for you. Your cart, your very own! And Sarina gives you the donkey. And please get in, get in; and we will all get in, too—as many as can!"

"O Nello! It is perfect!" exclaimed Mara, flinging her arms about Nello and Sarina both at once, and hugging and kissing them delightedly. And then they all pressed about the Cart and Nello explained what the pictures were all about.

"See! This is the first one! And it's Angelica and her brother Argaliá appearing before Charlemagne the Emperor."

"Charlemagne is perfect," said Mara approvingly. "His crown is nicer than the one at Monreale."

"And this one?" inquired Angiolo about the next picture on the Cart.

"Orlando killing a Saracen. Don't you like his horse, Brigliadoro? I thought first I would

make it a white one, but then black was better, more terrible, and the gold trappings show up better. Don't you like the way Orlando's sword glitters—that is Durlindana, that sword, you know."

"The next one frightens me," objected Sarina. "It's Orlando gone crazy——"

"Because Angelica married Medoro," explained Nello, showing them the other side of the Cart.

"Oh, yes," said Mara, pointing out Angelica and Medoro off in a corner looking with rather stony faces at poor Orlando, who was all in a twist at the other end of the picture.

"*This* is the best one, I think," and everyone was properly pleased when Nello pointed out Astolfo, a perfect picture of a gallant knight riding back from the Moon on a wingèd Horse.

"The horse is called the Hip-po-graph," Sarina proudly told them. "And he is bringing back Orlando's wits."

To talk about Nello's Carretto in this way is a very poor substitute for what that merry

crowd really saw as they examined it and climbed in and mingled with the flowers and the fun and the laughter. For it was such a blaze of color, that Carretto, and the little people painted on it were so bravely decked in robes which Nello had tried to make look like the wonderful mosaics adorning the old chapels he knew so well. And how the sun made the red and the gold fairly blaze! The little mirror between the donkey's eyes stole the smile from many a laughing little face that day. The great feather that was the donkey's crowning glory bobbed up and down and all the little bells that hung like a fringe about his neck played tunes like fairy music. Upon the place of honor sat Mara, and in his hands Angiolo held the gilded reins.

As the Cart started, a shout went up, and flowers, flowers came from everywhere. Mara squeezed Nello's hand, and again and again she said it, "It's the loveliest Cart in the World!"

CHAPTER V

THE NEXT TO LEAVE HOME

OUT in the giardinetto, the little garden, Sarina and Nello were playing.

"It is ten days since Mara went, isn't it?" said Sarina meditatively, gluing a thin cloth mantle upon the little clay figure she held in her hand. She had been gloriously busy all the hot morning fashioning little clay images some three or four inches tall and then baking them out in the sun.

"This is St. Lucy," she continued. "Isn't her lamp a good one? Please paint her for me now," handing St. Lucy to Nello.

"You shouldn't have put the mantle on first, silly!" said Nello, leaving his favorite round top. "My Apollo top," he called it, like any other little boy in Palermo. Sarina flushed and Nello repented.

"You really have made her *very* well," he said, examining the little figurine more carefully. "Such nice little stockings—and shoes, too! They are almost as well done as my whistling St. George." Nello drew out of his belt a little figure not unlike St. Lucy in size and shape but quite wonderfully dressed in gilded armor and with two tiny holes in the back of his feet through which Nello could whistle to his heart's content.

"I am going to have a procession," said Sarina gravely, watching Nello as he deftly painted eyes and lips and mouth and nose on St. Lucy's face. "See!" and she showed him a tiny road with a shrine at the end of it, "made out of stones and Lola's Madonnina."

"Where did you get so many figurini!" exclaimed Nello, jumping up to look more carefully at the long row of little figures, each one bearing a tiny banner or "pretend" torch.

"That's your St. Peter," explained Sarina quickly. "You don't mind, do you? He's at the head of the procession. Aren't the shep-

herds pretty? Mamma let me have the Presepio shepherds. Doesn't this one make you think of the real one we heard playing to his sheep on the funny old flute at Siracusa last year?"

"So it is! It has clothes on exactly like his—and the hat, too!" added Nello.

Just then Mamma Bice's voice was heard calling from the terrazza. "Nello! Sarina! Come! A surprise! Someone is here!"

The two children rushed excitedly to the house.

"The postino!" cried Nello.

"Cakes!" panted Sarina, hoping to find there the vendor of torti, or little cakes that every Sicilian child loves dearly.

"Cakes, fiddlesticks!" said Nello, very superior in manner—so superior that he tumbled head first over Mumu, the cat, who howled with indignation while Nello sprawled on all fours and raised his head to find a pair of blue-grey eyes very like his mother's smiling down kindly on him.

"Why—it's—it's——"

"Uncle Pasquale!" explained that gentleman, lifting Sarina up and giving her a kiss on each round cheek.

"Uncle Pasquale!" exclaimed Nello, "from Florence!"

"Just so!"

"But why didn't you come to Mara's wedding?" asked Sarina a little reprovingly.

"I had to be away for many important reasons. And how I did want to be here!"

"It was a very good wedding," Sarina informed him.

"Such unusual presents!" continued Uncle Pasquale. Nello looked pleased and Sarina began to pull her uncle towards the rear of the garden.

"Come," she urged. "Come and see what Nello did. I did a tiny little bit, too."

"What can it be!" said Uncle Pasquale. Nello looked at him half shyly, half suspiciously.

"Nello is a painter," explained Sarina.

"Oh, not just that exactly," Nello protested, "I want to be! This was just for Mara, and for fun. Though it was quite, quite hard work." As he added the last words he opened the gate, and there, in the little walled-in back street, stood the Carretto. It had been brought there that very morning—rather to Nello's surprise at the time. "Why!" he said now. "*You* are the reason why Mamma Bice had it brought here, aren't you? It was for you to see!"

"It is magnificent!" said Uncle Pasquale. "What a strut that gentleman has and what a really beautiful Principessa!"

"*He* is Orlando," explained Nello.

"And *that* is the Princess Angelica," added Sarina.

"And Mara and her sposino went off in this carretto," continued Nello, "a little way—on the wedding day."

"But after, to the train, in a most grand and shiny automobile," added Sarina.

"The gnocchi are spoiling. Come, Signori," called Lola from off in the direction of the

house. "You can worship the cart again later."

"We'll have to go," said Nello. "Lola is very stern. Babbo says she is the ruler of our house."

So back they went to the cool, dark dining-room, and there, as they sat at the table, a great and exciting plan was told to the happy and bewildered Nello. Uncle Pasquale seemed to begin it, but Mamma Bice, Nello decided, looked very wise; Babbo Beppo, too.

"How would you like to come back to Florence with me?" Uncle Pasquale asked Nello.

"Back to Florence!" The boy's eyes shone and he looked quickly at Mamma Bice and then at his father.

"You'd like to be a Tuscan for a little while, wouldn't you?" teased Babbo Beppo, not unkindly. "They are like the Greeks, aren't they, those Florentines—divide the world up into Florentines and—barbarians!"

Uncle Pasquale laughed as Nello added:

"Babbo! You said once that there's more

real Greece left in Sicily than ever got to Florence."

"Tell him the rest, Pasquale," said Mamma Bice.

"Why, just so! Signorino Nipote, I will steal you away for a year and a day and you will be taught how to paint if you'll stay."

"Uncle Pasquale! Mamma! Babbo!" Nello's eyes danced, and he waved excited fingers in the air. "Do you really mean it—it just can't be true, can it? O may I, may I?"

"Is it your dream come true?" asked Mamma Bice.

And then everybody smiled and laughed and little Sarina clapped her hands until she realized that she was to be the only one left behind. The next minute her black eyes filled up with tears and a loud wail followed.

"Dear me! Dear me!" Nello sprang to her and threw his arms around her.

"Don't cry, Sorellina Sariddu. I will bring you back presents and treasures. I will send you a dolly—so big—so big——"

"With yellow hair," added Babbo.

"Like the Princess Angelica?" asked Sarina, reviving a little.

"Just like her, Picciriddu—and better," said Mamma Bice, comforting the child. "You and I will play together and take rides in Mara's carretto."

"And I will come back——" put in Nello.

"A great painter, eh?" said Babbo, punching his young son disrespectfully in the ribs.

"Babbo, you are mean!" objected Nello, wriggling away.

"Can you be ready in three days' time?" asked Uncle Pasquale.

"So soon!" Mamma Bice gasped a little. This family of hers seemed to be quite melting away, she thought.

"Oh, yes!" Nello said eagerly. "I can pack more quickly than the Sirocco blows!"

More excitement, more busy-ness for the Villino Verde! More good-byes to this one and that one—people and pets and places! Nello's feet did seem like wings, those days, and he flew

here and there telling his news to many excited listeners. Of these none was happier or gladder than Fra Salvaturi.

"You will do me honor, I know," he told the boy. "At least, you will try."

Three days later, down at the wharf amidst a joyful noise of whistles and men's and boys' voices, pullings and haulings and liftings, Nello and Uncle Pasquale stood on the deck of the Santa Rosalià and watched the rest of the family wave a smiling good-bye to the travelers. As they steamed slowly out and past the water front, Nello's sharp eyes caught sight of old Jeli the Fisherman. There was the boat with its orange-colored sails fluttering in the light morning breeze. Nello's face clouded. He had been so full of the thought of getting away that till then he had not realized what leaving meant. His uncle looked kindly down at the boy struggling with his first faint touch of homesickness.

"That's Jeli's boat—my fisherman," explained Nello, pretending to be quite calm.

"Where you did your cart?"

"Yes."

"Think what you'll be painting a year from now!"

Nello brightened again. "I could paint Jeli —in his boat, perhaps—and this!" The boy waved his hand proudly to the slowly disappearing view of Monte Pellegrino and the Conca d'Oro.

"The world is full of things to paint, and this is only your beginning."

"And in a year!" exclaimed Nello.

Just then, on the horizon, a little line of smoke appeared—just a thin little line. On the deck of the steamer someone explained to another: "Men-of-war—Italian—ours — and English. They say——" Nello lost the rest.

"Oh, Uncle Pasquale, can Tuscany be as beautiful as my Sicily?" His uncle put his arms around the boy's shoulders.

"You shall see," he said. "You will know better a year from now."

A year from then! Little did either of them

guess what a different world they would be living in. But as yet, Monte Pellegrino was still in the light and no shadow darkened the bright beauty of the Conca d'Oro.

CHAPTER VI

THE CITY OF THE LILY

"SUMMER must be only just beginning here," said Nello, looking out of the window as their train came nearer and nearer to Florence.

"Yes," said Uncle Pasquale, "it has been a long winter and you can still see bits of snow even on Monte Morello, and there were violets in my garden the other day. Spring comes later to Tuscany than to Sicily, but it isn't any less beautiful than yours, you'll see!"

Nello's eyes were dancing with eagerness and he quite willingly agreed. "Oh!" he exclaimed as the train wound slowly through terraces of vineyards, and "Oh! Oh!" again as they caught a full and golden glimpse of the valley of the Arno in the light of the late afternoon.

"That is Monte Morello—with the great purple shadow," explained Uncle Pasquale.

"And that—that is Florence?—those spires and towers? And that must be Giotto's Tower!"

"Bravo!" said Uncle Pasquale. "You have learned your lesson well, haven't you?"

Then followed a tremendous blowing of whistles, and squeaks and rasping noises as the train puffed into the station, and Nello and Uncle Pasquale jumped down almost into the arms of two very excited young girls.

"Eccolo! Here he is!" said Uncle Pasquale, quite pelted with hugs and kisses. "Eccolo! your fine young cousin! Here, Nello! This is Rita and this is Simonetta!"

More huggings and kissings and then off they tripped to the nearest carriage. Clatter, clatter over the streets they rattled, and crack, crack, went the driver's long snake-like whip. It was only the air that was hit, to be sure, but the sound made the narrow streets seem alive with echoes. Nello's eyes fairly ached

with looking at piazzas and palaces, churches and people. Meanwhile Simonetta and Rita were looking at him.

"Is it different from Palermo?" inquired Rita as they clicked over the cobblestones down the Via Cavour.

"Oh, yes, yes! You have no sea here!" Nello said a little disdainfully.

"We have the Arno," Simonetta reminded him.

"The Arno," Nello admitted.

"And the Ponte Vecchio," added Rita.

"And the Boboli Gardens!" continued Simonetta.

"Fiesole!" said Rita.

"You sound like a service in church!" said Uncle Pasquale, laughing at them.

"I don't mind," declared Nello, quite willing to find Florence as lovely as his mother had always described it to him. "But Palermo, my Golden Shell, is beautiful, too—and you will come and see it for yourself some day."

"Meanwhile," said Uncle Pasquale, as the

carriage drew up suddenly and stopped in front of a pretty square house, "meanwhile," he repeated, "here we are! This is our home, and yours too, Nello."

"And," sniffed Rita as they ran into the open doorway, "I think I smell dinner!"

"It smells very much like home," said Nello, and drew a long breath of satisfaction. Such a happy jumble of things as was sizzling and boiling in his mind! The new cousins, for instance! Simonetta, whose name and whose hair reminded him both of the Fairy Fiammetta, he thought, and of his own Mamma Bice. Simonetta was two years older than Nello and she seemed at times quite grown up. But Rita was a little like Sarina, perhaps—older, of course, but dark and playful and quite inclined to tease. There wasn't any Mamma Bice in this family and Nello had almost forgotten it until bedtime came.

They put him in a pleasant small room next to his cousins, and from his little balcony he could look over the willow trees on the plain

between the Mugnone and Monte Morello. He could see the camellias and flowering lemon trees down in the walled-in garden, and all of a sudden a nightingale started singing.

"I wish *she* were here, Mamma Bice," he thought. "It's funny to think she once lived where she could see Monte Morello." And perhaps if he hadn't been so sleepy he would have been a little, oh, just a very little, homesick.

The next morning Nello was awakened by the unexpected but most friendly appearance of three tiny snow-white dogs. They jumped all over his bed and tickled his nose and told him in every possible way except words to get up, get up. Just as he finished dressing there was a knock at the door and Rita's little head peeped through the opening. All the little dogs ran towards her with a wild rush of affection and excitement.

"Are they all yours? Oh, what are they, and what are their names?"

"This one is Otellino, and he's mine," said

Rita, hugging one up against her cheeks. "That one is Lorenzaccio, and he is Simonetta's."

"And this one?" Nello picked up the last one.

"That one hasn't any name and he's for you."

"For me!" Nello was overcome. "I shall name him Farfallino—little Butterfly—for his feet are like wings, aren't they?"

The little dogs were, indeed, a fascinating trio, their soft white fur clipped into ruffles on their slender legs, and their necks ruffed too, and only a thin little layer of fur fluff on their backs like a velvet coat.

"We take them down to the Lung'Arno to be clipped quite regularly. Everybody does. No one has one dog here in Florence—at least one little one. It would be lonesome. So we always have at least two or three."

That morning they all had a gay time together planning out what Nello should do

and what they would show him and where they would take him.

"I," said Uncle Pasquale, "I am to be the Despot. I have arranged for your studies ——" Here Rita interrupted him with, "Oh don't begin with studies, Babbo! You'll frighten him."

"No; let's take turns being guides—the way they do for Americans and English people. I will show you first the Ponte Vecchio and the Piazza Signoria. The Market, too—on a Friday!"

"And on Thursday *I* will take you to the Flower Market and to Fiesole!"

"May I speak now?" asked Uncle Pasquale, pretending to be very humble. Nello laughed and Farfallino barked. "You are to study—shall we put the drawing and painting first? And along with that, Latin and Greek and history and grammar and matematica." Nello groaned. Rita was much distressed.

"You will kill him with so much studying," she protested.

"Va bene! We'll do sightseeing first," said Uncle Pasquale.

So that very morning they started out and tripped gaily down the Via San Gallo, past San Lorenzo with its unfinished façade, and the funny little piazza in front of it, and the still funnier rows of yellow furry coats hanging out on lines, belonging to the stores opposite to the church. Out into the Piazza del Duomo they came, and there before them was Brunelleschi's dome and Giotto's Tower, and all about the Tower pigeons flying, and on the steps of the Duomo baskets and baskets, low and flat and with arching handles, holding moss roses.

"Why, it's San Zenobi's Day, to be sure!" said Simonetta. And after buying roses for each one, Uncle Pasquale took the children to the Duomo that Nello might see the roses blessed by the silver bust of the Saint. The boy drew a deep breath of pleasure as they stepped into the great, simple, empty-looking church. Only a little light was at the farther end, and only a priest or two were left to bless

the roses for a belated comer. As Uncle Pasquale and the children approached, one of the priests came to the railing and held there for an instant the silver image of the saint. Rita and Simonetta passed their roses gently over San Zenobi's mouth. Then Nello did the same with his rose and Uncle Pasquale's.

"At least we should now be saved from too much trouble for a year," said Simonetta as they came out again into the brilliant sunlight.

Nello hardly noticed her. He would have liked to stay, he thought, in the great still, empty church. He would go back, he decided, many times. Perhaps Uncle Pasquale would let him go alone. This was different from Palermo, he thought—things were not so bare in Palermo. And he liked this. Was it because Mamma Bice had once been here and told him so often about it?

"You'll knock somebody down if you don't look out, Mr. Look-at-the-Moon!" said Rita tauntingly. Nello blushed and came back to

earth and to such a novel and delightful sight that he quite forgot his dreaming.

"It doesn't behave like a bridge at all, does it?" he exclaimed, as they walked slowly across the Ponte Vecchio. Such gay little shops full of jewelry, and a gallery overhead, they told him. They stood in the open space in the center of the bridge and looked over across to the houses of the quartiere of San Jacopo. The high, full light of mid-day made all the uneven rows of houses and the tower of San Jacopo itself look like old bronze-gold—gold houses, brown river, and green jewels in the shop windows beside them.

"What a friendly little tower!" exclaimed Nello, nodding at San Jacopo. "It all looks somehow like mosaics come true. Everything fits so nicely—so many bells ringing, the way people speak—so different from my Palermo—and—and—and——" He stopped breathless.

"Why do you want to be a painter?" asked Rita suddenly. "If *I* were a boy I'd be an officer of the Lancers, at least!"

"That's because you like to see them go by the Viale Margherita with their shining lances and their nice grey uniforms," teased Simonetta. Rita blushed and denied this.

"That isn't fair, Signorina Simonetta! I'd like to fight for Italy."

"So would I! And of course I shall, some day, probably," hurriedly put in Nello. "Meanwhile,—" he felt a little shy, all of a sudden, and looked at Simonetta. Such pretty eyes she had! Kind, like Mamma Bice's, too! "You don't really think it's funny for me to like to paint, do you?" he asked them.

Rita laughed and Simonetta teased again. "I think anything that comes from la bass' Italia is funny—and sometimes very nice, too," she added, by way of reward.

Such full and happy days as followed this first glimpse of Florence and her endless store of places to be seen and stories to be told!

"I couldn't tell you even just a little bit of all we do," Nello wrote his mother, "but we have seen Dante's House and Galileo's Tower

and the Boboli Gardens, which I like very much, and a wonderful bank of iris blossoms up on the Viale dei Colli near the Porta Romana. They reminded me of Sicily. And we have seen millions of pictures and too many churches—but some so nice like Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce—and, of course, the Baptistery. But I like the Duomo best—inside. And I like places better than pictures, I think. Simonetta teases me and says, why, then, do I want to be a painter. Well, I do, more than ever."

One thing they all liked equally well to do, and that was just to wander down to the Mercato on Friday mornings and there to see and listen to the peasants who came into town from the country round about. There was a noticeable lack of younger men among the peasants, and the bartering and talk were carried on, these days, largely by the old and the grey and the bald.

The first time that they started out on this Friday morning expedition Nello could not go

slowly enough. There were too many tempting sights. Huge green umbrellas, upside down, full of buttons and thread and needles and pins; umbrellas full of whips for sale, horse-reins, bits of harness, aprons, caps, clothes—a whole portable department store of umbrellas ranged along the sides of the little narrow street and taking the place of sidewalks, since sidewalks in Italian towns are few and inclined to be narrow if there at all!

"What huge furry coats!" shouted Nello with delight as they almost collided with a line of yellow fur garments dangling on a rope that stretched from one balcony to another over the street below. "The season is over—they are surpassing cheap!" called out the vendor of the coats. "Buy, Signorine, buy!"

"Not I! Not I!" answered Nello, laughing at the shrewd-eyed vendor.

"Get me a straw hat, Simonetta," begged Rita as they next discovered a row of hats neatly arranged next to rows of straw flower

baskets—lovely long, low baskets with high-arching handles.

"Hush, silly," said Simonetta, "you can get better and cheaper ones up at Fiesole."

As they walked on, the streets became fuller and fuller, and by the time they reached the square of the Piazza Signoria, Nello thought there must surely be a procession about to pass by.

"But why so many old men, and bald ones, and little ones and big ones—and what are they talking about?" The place was certainly full of them. Up into Verrocchio's beautiful court-yard they sauntered, up on to the Loggia dei Lanzi, filling up half a dozen little by-ways and alleys—people, people, people. Nello was much impressed by it all. Simonetta shrugged her shoulders and explained.

"They just do their business affairs here—that is all. It has always been so—every Friday morning."

Nello was a little impatient at her being so cool. "You don't really see how queer it is!

Sometimes I think you don't really love it much, or else you pretend you don't—all this!" and he pointed towards the Palazzo Vecchio's tower rising like a dark lily up from the piazza below.

"Oh, yes, we do!" Rita admitted, "but more on San Giovanni's Day—or Venti Settembre, when it is all shining at night with light."

"Do they use little oil lamps with wicks in them?"

"Yes, yes," Rita explained eagerly. "All the way up the sides of the Tower they put them, and on Giotto's Tower too, and up at San Miniato—on the bridges—too, millions of little glasses with olive oil and floating wicks, and someone lights them, but somehow one never knows how or when. You are looking and they are just the same as usual, and then, presto! they are all lighted, and the least little wind makes the towers look like nothing but light and gold, and beautiful!"

"I wish I could see it," said Nello. He did, but not that year.

CHAPTER VII

A TRUE TALE

THE Maestro Signorelli's studio was a great, high, quite bare room in an old palazzo on the other side of the Arno. Nello quickly learned the way to it, and after a few days of being piloted to it proudly set out alone. Down the Via San Gallo he went, past San Lorenzo and after that dodging first by this narrow street and then by that until he came to the Ponte Trinità and crossed over towards Santo Spirito and the Maestro's studio close by. A neighboring convent bell usually rang out the hour as Nello waited for the big door to open. Such a splendid, strong, protecting sort of door—with a fine old design worked out on it in square, heavy nails! Perhaps it was because the door was so big that the Maestro looked so little. He was, indeed, a

rather shrivelled sort of person, with hair still black save for a strange, stiff white tuft right in the middle of his forehead. He had strong, slender hands and always wore very pointed shoes, a dark velvet jacket, and smoked long, very long, narrow cigars. His eyes were as sharp as a hawk's, but they could be gentle, too, and the first time Nello heard him laugh he knew that he would never really be afraid of him.

One morning, Nello ran up the flight of stairs leading to the studio to find the Maestro muttering and sputtering all to himself over the morning paper.

"Who says we don't want it! Who says we aren't ready! Who talks about honor and Alliances!" Then, as he noticed Nello, "Boy, boy," he lamented, "you're too young and I'm too old—but I'll find something to do if ever we break with that canaglia of Austria and side with the builders of freedom! To think of a son of one of Garibaldi's Thousand having to sit by and wait, wait, wait!"

Nello wanted to go on with this fiery talk about Italy and War and Garibaldi, but he knew the Maestro would talk no more until it was time for the little "spontino" they always shared just before noon.

When that time came, Nello said to the Maestro, "I wish Garibaldi were alive now, don't you?"

"Why, of course, you do, you little Palermitan! How is it we didn't think of it before! I'm almost as good a Palermitan myself," said the Maestro.

From the cassone on which he was sitting, Nello could see, through one of the deep-set windows, the gardens of the palazzo, full of huge pots of flowers, some whole, some broken, and all set rather carelessly against a background of azaleas and camellias blossoming pink and white. From another window the Ponte Vecchio looked farther away than it really was, and there was Giotto's Tower, and Fiesole up in the distance, its little square Cam-

panile clipping the blue, blue sky in two, in the hollow spot between the hills.

"How are you almost as good as a Palermitan?" asked Nello, feeling rather sleepy as he sat there in the warm golden light, so pleasantly fed and at ease.

"My father," the Maestro proudly informed him, drawing himself up very straight, "My father," he repeated, "was one of the Thousand!"

Nello sprang to his feet. He wasn't sleepy any longer. He shook the hand the Maestro held out to him and exclaimed excitedly, "Your father was one of the Thousand! Mine would have been but he wasn't born then!"

"Yes," went on the Maestro, "mine was only a student then—at Bologna—just a mere boy, and like so many others he ran off to be one of the Garibaldians. He actually started off with them on that wonderful day when they left Genoa on the way to Sicily. But of course you have heard about it a thousand times!"

"Oh, but I'd like to hear it again! And I

know things, too. Have you ever been to Palermo?" asked Nello.

The Maestro shook his head somewhat regretfully. "Not yet," he said. "Too poor to travel; too many blessèd relatives to support. And I am getting so old! But there! My father saw enough to last over many generations."

"You tell me and I'll tell you," begged Nello. "You see, Garibaldi is my Hero. I have a red shirt and grey trousers and a ponchio, just like the one he wore. I use mine when I pretend to be a great general."

The Maestro walked over to a chest at the other end of the studio and drew from it a battered heap of old clothes reduced almost to tatters. He stroked them quite gently and a sort of fierce quiet came into his eyes. He seemed to be seeing things very far away.

"Please tell me," begged Nello again, half timidly touching the bit of tricolor pinned to the red shirt. "Please tell me about the Thousand."

"You remember," began the Maestro, "why Garibaldi finally consented to go down to Sicily! He had been asked to do so again and again, but the right time was a long while in coming. It had been coming, though, and by February of that famous year of 1860 Lombardy was ready. Piedmont, Tuscany, Venetia were ready. Victor Emmanuel was looking towards Rome, and only Naples and Sicily and Rome, indeed, were needed to make United Italy a fact. It had been for so long, so long only a dream! Garibaldi had been asked to go to Sicily before this, but 'never until they show they really want me,' he had proudly and stubbornly insisted. And, at last, after many small and fruitless little revolutions, things began really to happen. The Sicilians rebelled more and more against their Neapolitan rulers. All over the island, fighting companies of country people were formed—rude, uneducated folk, many of them, but brave and willing to fight for liberty. Fighting for liberty meant, of course, sending the hated Neapolitans away

forever from the island of Sicily. It was in March, finally, wasn't it, that the statesman Mazzini wrote a famous letter to the Sicilians, saying that all the rest of Italy was looking for them to join in the struggle? Then came April and with it came to Garibaldi the news that all Sicily was aflame with revolt. The news was brought to him at midnight on the seventh day of April. The next day he ordered preparations to be made for an expedition to set out from Genoa as soon as possible. And then," concluded the Maestro, pausing to take a last puff of his long, thin cigar, "then began the real fun and the real excitement."

"Some people," said Nello, looking quite grave and important, "some people think that Cavour was so much greater than Garibaldi that Garibaldi shrivels into almost nothing—as a patriot."

"Ma ché! What nonsense!" the Maestro pronounced quite scornfully. "Rather are they like two different ends of the same stick; square end—that's Garibaldi, pointed end—that's

Cavour—fighting head and planning head. And with Victor Emmanuel and the good backbone of the North to help the hot hearts and hands of the South. Lucky Italy to have all three—Cavour, Garibaldi, Victor Emmanuel! Heaven has surely favored our Italy—once in a while!"

"I like to hear you talk about anything, caro Maestro," said Nello, flushed and approving.

"Which means you wish I were saying something different, eh?" smiled the Maestro with a half wink of one eye. Nello laughed and nodded his head involuntarily.

"About the Thousand, you know. You said —your father——"

The Maestro began again.

"First of all, you remember, they embarked from Genoa—climbed into the two ships one morning early, early, and stole out of the harbor before anyone could see them go. Over a thousand there were, and mostly young, so young, and many of them just students. And

with enough spirit to move the dead and only enough ammunition to kill a coopful of sick hens! They even lost that at the start, for the munition boats made a mistake and started in the opposite direction." The Maestro chuckled at this and Nello interrupted him with a question.

"Did you ever hear how they used to make cartridges at the Palazzo of Baron Riso?"

The Maestro nodded. "When there were balls going on?"

"Yes! Yes!" Nello's voice grew loud with excitement. "I have been right there—at the Toledo. And once I saw one of the printing presses that they used to carry around in a flower pot, printing things on it to excite the people. Wasn't it funny about the two Risos they had then! Riso the Plumber and Riso the Baron! Babbo Beppo always used to say one was as good as the other at getting the people to rise against those dogs of Neapolitans."

"They were! They were!" said the Maestro,

getting quite wrought up, too, and beginning to pace the floor in quick, nervous steps.

"But that was before Garibaldi got to Sicily, wasn't it? Before the landing at Marsala, in 1860, and before the battle of Calatafimi."

"Calatafimi!" exclaimed Nello proudly, trying to keep in step with the Maestro. "I've been there!"

The Maestro's face had clouded for an instant and his steps slowed up. "My father was almost killed there, but not quite, thank Heaven! Such a march as they had had! From Salemi over that flat, fearful desert, almost dead of thirst and the heat. They lay down by the roadside and tried to suck the dew from the grass. And then just the opposite luck. Rain all that night before the battle; no tent for anyone but the General. Ugh! How wretched they were!"

"But they took it, they took it!" said Nello with sparkling eyes. "They stormed the hill, didn't they, foot by foot, even with the Nea-

politans on top of them? The Neapolitans always had the best places, didn't they?"

"Of course!" granted the Maestro. "That is what they had taken Sicily for, and why they kept it—just to have the best places and let everyone else wait on them and be at their beck and call. Pretty people that—the Bourbons, the despots! Calatafimi! Ah, yes, my poor Padre! He used to tell us how agonized they were when they saw a huge Neapolitan swoop down on them during one of their rushes up the ascent, and actually take their flag. There was an awful moment when Bixio——"

"On his white horse——" put in Nello.

"On it or off it, Bixio came to Garibaldi and said, 'General, I fear we ought to retreat.' And what did Garibaldi say?"

"I know! I know!" cried Nello. "'Here we make Italy or die!'"

"And they made Italy, didn't they?" the Maestro went on. "You remember how Garibaldi was bending over—my father was quite near him—and a stone hit the General in the

back, and he sprang up and said, 'They are using stones—the Neapolitans! Their ammunition is gone! Come on!' And the Mille made a last desperate rush and took the top of the hill. And then it was that my father was wounded—more or less everywhere, but mostly in the head and the back. You know, by the way, what they did with the wounded?"

Nello shook his head doubtfully.

"Carried them off the next day to neighboring farm houses and villages in the kind of Carretto you painted for your sister's wedding, Signorino!"

"That is nice," said Nello, highly pleased. "I like to think that. It makes me feel as though I had sort of been there."

The Maestro stood silent for a few moments, puffing away at another long, narrow cigar.

"Did your father tell you any more?" asked Nello.

"Oh, many things, but perhaps the one I have liked to remember better than any other was of how many of the soldiers, the day after

the battle, walked a good three miles to see the lovely, lonely Temple of Segeste. They had seen it only dimly and far off the day before. They must have wanted to think Sicily could be again what it was in the happier days when temples like that could be built. It was to bring back times like those that they had fought and won."

"When you come to Sicily," said Nello gallantly, "I will take you to see it, the Temple of Segeste. I have been there with Mamma Bice. She likes it too."

"I will come, perhaps!" said the Maestro, and then he laughed unexpectedly. "Did you ever hear—you must have!—how the Commander and Representative of the Neapolitan King fell off his horse one rainy birthday of the King, and all his gorgeous uniform got redecorated in the mud? What a splash for the prancing fool!"

"Once," said Nello half shyly, "on a certain occasion I had to tell the story of the Taking of Palermo. It was very exciting."

"Well, well!" said the Maestro, sitting down and settling back comfortably in a fine old carven chair that rather swallowed him up. "Tell it to me. I'm never tired of hearing it. Your turn now!"

"It begins," Nello started, "this way," and he half chanted, half recited the words. "A sleeping city! The Golden Shell! With its groves of lemons and oranges, olives and cactus, protected by mountains and bathed by the sea. This was what they saw, Garibaldi and his Thousand, as they looked down from the heights and knew that twenty-one thousand soldiers were there, with cavalrymen, with artillery and—and——" Nello stopped helplessly. "I can't remember the next word," he groaned.

"Never mind the next word! Say it yourself. You know it."

Nello swallowed with relief and went on in his own rather helter-skelter way. "You see, Garibaldi fooled them. He had to! They were too many for him. And the night of May—

May—— Oh, yes! May 24th, they—the Mille—started off towards the interior of the island as though they had decided to retreat. They got out a little way and then turned off abruptly and spent the night in the woods. And the Neapolitans went chasing them on the other road towards the interior and kept chasing them until the day Palermo gave in. Meanwhile, Garibaldi got to Gibilrossa—that's the monastery at top of Gibilrossa Pass. You can see all Palermo there. And there were French ships and English ones and American men-of-war in the bay. And when the sun went down there were beacon fires lighted to greet Garibaldi on all the hills around the Conca d'Oro. My! how furious and scared the Neapolitans were. You see they had fortified the outside of the city just perfectly, but the inside was sizzling with people ready to side with Garibaldi when he came. They got in through the Porta Garibaldi, galloped down the street to the Fiera Vecchia, and—Hurrah! What a noise they must have made—beating

on all the bells because the beasts of policemen had taken off the clappers. And the more the Neapolitans bombarded, the more the people helped Garibaldi fight. They fought three days, and Garibaldi spent most of the time on the steps of the fountain in Piazza Pretoria. I have sat on that very step. That was when he cracked his whip while bullets and shells burst all around him. The people thought the whip was a spell that kept him from harm. They loved him, didn't they! They brought him flowers, even in the midst of the fighting. And they called him 'Piddu' as a pet name, and they thought he was a descendant of Sinibaldi, the father of Santa Rosalià, because his name was Garibaldi. Lola, our nurse, used to tell me how the people poured scalding water and threw the heaviest things they could find down from windows and balconies on the Neapolitan troops. They just had to, didn't they! For they had been kept like prisoners so long. No one could much more'n breathe without being watched by the police. Oh! I remember a

funny thing about Naples just then. You couldn't wear a beard without being taken for a Liberal, and if you did they'd march you off to be shaved! And in the prisons! Most everyone that was very good seems to have been chained or starved in a prison. I think I should have almost wanted to be. An old friend of my mother's, the day before Palermo was entered by Garibaldi, made a tricolor out of pieces of ribbons she had worn—because you weren't allowed to buy red or white or green in the shops. But Garibaldi beat them! And mustn't it have been wonderful to see the Via Toledo all hung with flags and flowers and all the Neapolitan troops—so many thousand of them—marching out, surrendering to the few poor Red-Shirts, all ragged and dirty. And wouldn't you like to have seen the people bringing Baron Riso and five other prisoners from the prison at Castellamare where they took them out the minute the tricolor flag floated there and Garibaldi had won!"

"Bravo!" said the Maestro, patting Nello

approvingly on the shoulder and offering him a delightful little cake as a sort of reward. "Very nicely said."

"I forgot much," Nello declared. "Oh, yes! One thing that my new brother-in-law told me last month—how the day before the fight, some officers, English and American, were entertained by Garibaldi. One of them from the American ship gave him a revolver and he carried it in the fight all the next day. Angiolo told me because he had met someone who was related to the officer who gave the pistol to Garibaldi. Angiolo is an officer in the Navy, too, you see. A very pleasant one. I like to have him for my brother-in-law. Mara did very well."

"And now!" exclaimed the Maestro, suddenly getting up.

"And now!" echoed Nello, with shining eyes and heart aflame.

The Maestro continued quite as though Nello now were the audience and he a real orator: "It is for Italy to show that she is nobody's

slave and cannot be bought, and that at any cost whatever she will redeem her own lost provinces and gather up her exiled sheep into her fold!" So saying, the Maestro mopped his forehead with a brilliant orange silk handkerchief and flourished a huge paint brush in the air. Then, in a final burst of patriotism, he and Nello shouted to each other at one and the same time, "Evviva l'Italia!" After this they both laughed and then the Maestro pretended to scowl severely at Nello's last drawing. The boy had begun to work hard and was already making excellent progress, but the Maestro never told Nello this. He only told Uncle Pasquale—once—and Uncle Pasquale had written it to Mamma Bice. And she had told Babbo Beppo. Then she had written just a hint of it back to Nello. The night after Nello had received the letter he had dreamed a long dream about Sarina.

"They pretended that they were quite happy," Sarina was telling him. "But I knew better. They miss you just *terribly*. So, of

course, do I. The Cart? Of course the Cart helps—since Mara isn't here to use it." And in the dream Nello saw Sarina steal out to talk to the little people on the Cart and to give them all the latest family gossip.

"Your Highness, O Lady Angelica!" he heard her say. "My brother is going to be a famous artist. And my sister's husband is ordered to secret harbors. And everybody is worried. And—and—I am very lonely, Lady Angelica." Here Sarina seemed quite to fall asleep, and, in his dream, Nello saw, confusedly, the Princess Angelica waving her hand to the sleeping child, and Lola stealing out to take a look at her, hugging the doll he had sent her and murmuring in her sleep little broken snatches of song that she and Nello had often sung together. In his dream he joined her singing and then woke slowly, to find himself singing alone.

CHAPTER VIII

A GREAT LADY OF SIENA

UNCLE PASQUALE was sitting out in the garden under the olive tree finishing his usual breakfast of two crooked rolls, two "butter roses" made fresh every morning, and left on a great green grape leaf by the dairy-peasant at the door of the Villa. Rolls and roses and two huge cups of coffee and milk, and that was Uncle Pasquale's breakfast. Then he smoked and read the news, while the children played about him and the three tiny dogs rolled in the sun or chased butterflies in and out of the camellias and the oleanders.

Today, Uncle Pasquale finished more quickly than usual, and, folding up the "Tribuna," said somewhat indifferently, "Who would like to go on a journey?"

"I!"

"And I."

"I, too!" came the three cries all at once, and the ridiculous little dogs barked and ran around more frisky and fluffy than ever.

"Where to?" asked Rita eagerly.

"Guess," said Uncle Pasquale.

"To Prato?"

"Prato! No, further than that!" sniffed Uncle Pasquale.

"Prato is very nice," protested Simonetta. "I remember how you preached to us there from the outdoor pulpit once—Oh, long ago."

"Well, perhaps, but it isn't Prato."

"Pisa, then," suggested Nello.

"Not Pisa, this time," continued his teasing uncle.

"Oh, make-believe land," said Rita impatiently. "Some place—any place, but do stop tormenting, you worst-teaser-in-the-world!"

"No, it is real," admitted her father. "One more guess. I'll give you a hint. Whose Saint's Day was it—well, let me see,—nine, ten days, about a week ago?"

"St. Catherine?" ventured Simonetta, on a chance.

"I know! I know!" cried Nello. "Siena it is—Siena!"

"Just so," said Uncle Pasquale. "Siena it is, and very soon—by the afternoon train today."

"Oh joyful!" said Rita, hugging two puppies at once and her father next.

"How long shall we be there?" asked Simonetta, who always liked to have things planned and orderly.

"A few days only, this time. I must be back soon, and young folks must study, too," pinching Nello amiably. "Off with you now and get Gino and Brigida to tell you what to do."

Gino and Brigida were the two servants who took care of the house, the children, Uncle Pasquale, and everything else belonging to the Villa. Gino had grown a little—just a very little—deaf and Brigida could see only out of one eye and a half, she said, but otherwise they were as strong as any youngsters, and as devoted as good old-fashioned Tuscan servants

could be. They played the parts of cook, housekeeper, gardener, nurse and almost of mother to the two girls. Uncle Pasquale often said of them that there might be greater saints in Heaven but none on earth, even though they did scold and tease each other and use language that saints are supposed to avoid.

"We are going to Siena! We are going to Siena!" chanted the three children to Brigida who was cutting up vegetables in the kitchen. "To Siena, to Siena!" they continued, finding Gino watering the flowers in the terra cotta vases on the balcony. After which happy and noisy announcements they spent a few moments packing little bags and saying little farewells to the dogs, the neighbors, the parrots, and the gold fish out in the fountain.

"What fun! What fun! To go on a journey," they sang as they packed and got themselves quite ready an hour or two before the time for leaving.

The next morning when they woke up, Simonetta rubbed her eyes and saw bright sun-

shine streaming through the slats of the half open blinds.

"Rita! Rita! Lazy Rita!" she said, yawning.

"Lazy, you too!" retorted Rita, sleepily. "Where is my—but Santo Cielo! Where are we?"

"In Siena, stupid! Don't you remember?"

The two girls dressed quickly and found their father and Nello walking up and down the terrazza overlooking Fontebranda, with the Cathedral and the rosy Mangia Tower in the near distance.

"How high up we are!" said Rita.

"It's just the opposite from the way Florence is, isn't it!" said Nello. "Florence lies down in the valley with the hills protecting her, and Siena seems to have climbed up on top of everything, where no one could get her."

"In the olden days that was really the only safe spot," said Uncle Pasquale. "You built your castles half like forts, and you always chose a high spot from which you could see any

enemy approaching. And you built your towns with streets so narrow they could be defended by only a few men, if necessary. Grim old doings, those, yet not so warlike as ours now." Uncle Pasquale's face clouded and he looked worried and troubled. A minute later, however, he walked over to the railing of the terrazza where they were to have breakfast.

"There," he said, pointing to a street below them, "there is St. Catherine's house and down still further is Fontebranda where good Sienese poor folk still go to do their washing. And this great church here is San Domenico—Catherine's Church."

"Tell us about her, Babbo," said Simonetta. So there, while they breakfasted, looking out on the roads winding up and down the hills, and on the brown-red tiled roofs of houses rising in uneven circles and clusters from the valley, Uncle Pasquale told them the story of St. Catherine of Siena.

"She was a great, a really great person," he began. "And she started when she was

younger even than any of you—think of that! Her father was a dyer and her mother a good and very busy person, with a large family to look after and probably not able to understand her little Catherine very well. For Catherine was a curious, dreamy sort of person,—more dreamy even than Simonetta here, or Nello, perhaps." Uncle Pasquale winked an eye and pretended not to notice Simonetta's blushes. "One of her older brothers," he went on, "took her when she was about five years old down the steps of the road leading to Fontebranda. She was so little that she had to be helped down the steep steps and on the way she looked up and thought she saw a heavenly vision. Holy people seemed to be beckoning to her and like another famous young girl——"

"Jeanne d'Arc!" interrupted Simonetta.

Uncle Pasquale nodded and went on with his story. "Like Jeanne d'Arc she felt she was being 'called' to a holy life. Strange little creature! When she was only seven she begged to be permitted to dress like a boy and become

a Dominican friar. Girls were not then admitted to that order and of course Catherine could hardly be allowed to try to fool the Dominicans. This made her very unhappy, but a kind and friendly old priest found a way to help her. 'You want to serve God and the saints, my child,' he told her. 'Well, you imagine to yourself that your own father and mother are our Lord and His blessed mother disguised as your parents. Let your brothers and sisters be to you holy saints and apostles and all will be well.' This seems to have quite consoled Catherine. In fact, when she was twelve—a marriageable age, then, think of it!"

"I'd rather not," put in Rita.

"Sh!" said Uncle Pasquale. "At twelve, she dyed her hair—the proper thing to do then——"

"I'd like that" (from Rita again).

"And went out among gay friends and tried to have a good time."

"I think she must have been very tiresome," pouted Rita, somewhat bored by this story.

"Rita, be still," reproved Simonetta, and Rita subsided.

"No," said Uncle Pasquale, "she wasn't tiresome, it seems, for her friends and relatives said of her that she was always light-hearted and ready with a laugh or a smile. And by means of persisting and pleading, she finally persuaded her people and her advisers to let her become a nun. For three years, until she was nineteen, she led the hardest, sternest, most unpleasant sort of a life, and then there came a great pestilence to Italy. It swept through Florence and Siena and terrified almost to death those who did not actually die of it. Catherine went about keeping up everyone's courage and she was so helpful that her fame spread far beyond Siena. And now begins the really exciting part of her story. The Pope, who should have been living at Rome, was then at Avignon, in France, and Catherine, like many other people, thought that he should come back and rule again in Italy. For all sorts of strife and lawlessness were going on in Italy

and some thought it was for lack of a head. Catherine was sure that only the Pope could help, and only if he were at Rome. So, though she was a very young woman, she went quite unattended all the way to Avignon."

"The Avignon of 'Sur le pont d'Avignon'?" asked Rita, humming the little French tune to which they had often danced.

"That very Avignon," answered Uncle Pasquale. "There, the only woman, before Pope and Cardinals and wise men, young and old, Catherine told the Pope what she thought. And she actually persuaded him to go back and bring his flock together. Rather a wonderful thing for a young lady to do. She must have had great power, for it was said of her that merely to look on her changed men from evil ways to good ones."

"That," said Rita, "is not an exciting story at all."

"But it is a nice one," said Simonetta. "I like it. So does Nello," smiling at the boy, who

looked a little as though he, too, were seeing visions.

Just then the waiter who had brought their breakfast remarked, as they rose from the table, "There is today the monthly fair—the Market. Perhaps the Signori would enjoy seeing our bei bori—our fine cattle."

"They are famous," said Uncle Pasquale.

"Which will you do—go sightseeing or to the Fiera?" he asked.

"Oh, both," said Nello.

"The Fair!" said the girls. So they began with the Fair.

Out through the winding, narrow streets they went in a rickety carriage drawn by a bony old horse, into the sunlight, into the shadow, and finally down a country road lined with hawthorne and brilliant with light. All the way out, going to the Fair or coming from it, they passed great white oxen drawing loads of country produce. Two pairs of these oxen were hardly able to pass each other on the road, so broad were their horns, and often they were

garlanded with green leaves. As they drew nearer the Fair a great and glorious medley of sounds could be heard, poultry clucking, cows mooing, and best and loudest, donkeys braying—braying up in joy and down in seeming agony—long brays, short brays, old brays, young brays, until one couldn't think for the noise—let alone talk!

"That donkey is like mine at home," said Nello, pointing out a trig little creature. Uncle Pasquale thought he heard something like a catch in the boy's voice. But Nello did not flicker an eyelash.

They lingered at the Fair and then drove back listening to the tales of the palio, that wonderful horse race which had been held in the Piazza ever since Siena beat the Florentines at Montaperti in the fourteenth century.

"They never did it but once and they have been celebrating it ever since," explained Uncle Pasquale to the girls, while he winked a little as their Sienese driver shrugged his shoulders.

"It is a fine sight to see," grunted the driver. "I doubt if you use such grand costumes in Florence—every contrada so fittingly represented, and the horses even taken into the special church of the Contrada to be blessed. You should see how well they behave—and afterwards the winning horse at the head of the table out in the street—where they feast in honor of the victory."

"Does the horse sit at the head of the table?" asked Uncle Pasquale innocently.

The driver squinted at him suspiciously. He didn't like Florentines. "Ma chè!" he exclaimed. "Sit? Why should he? He has a stall built, and it is only his head you see—and the head of the table."

"Of course," said Uncle Pasquale, and all but the driver laughed.

"Oh, oh! What stairs! What lovely steps!" exclaimed Simonetta as they came towards the stairs that go up to the open portal of the great unfinished Duomo.

"Great people say many things against the

beauty of this old Cathedral," said Uncle Pasquale. "They say it is wrong to have pictures on the pavement—you remember walking on them this morning. And they say this is bad and that is bad—but I am a barbarian, I guess. I love it—this Cathedral—and especially this stairway."

"Who wouldn't love it!" said Nello, looking up at the sky through the open portal at the top. "It seems as though there were no end to it and one could walk and walk right up to Heaven through the sky."

Three happy days they spent in the quaint old town on the hillside. They looked at pictures, discovered old streets and perhaps, next to the Cattle Fair, they enjoyed most of all the trip to the neighboring castle of Belcaro over across the valley. There they played at being great lords and ladies in the ilex grove, and there Nello defended Rita from unseen marauders, and Simonetta imagined herself a lovely unhappy lady somewhat closely resembling that Pia of whom Dante once wrote.

"It's been such a good time," said Rita as they somewhat unwillingly boarded the train for Florence.

"It's been quite a festa," added Simonetta.

"And now I'll work hard," said Nello, "because——"

"Yes, chi lo sa. Soon——"

It was soon. Only the next day cries in the street and faces and voices half startled, then excited and almost relieved, told the little Villa on the Mugnone that Uncle Pasquale had known the truth. Italy had indeed chosen the right, the hard but the right way. She had thrown down the gauntlet to Austria and in fighting for her own people she would be fighting too for that larger cause which until then England and France and Belgium had seemed to be bearing too much alone.

CHAPTER IX

NEWS FROM SICILY

WARMER and warmer grew the days and, in the streets of Palermo, louder and louder the cries of the vendors of refreshing water—"with a bit of aniseed, good for your health, Signor," or "fresh fruits—Oh what fine fruits," they would call. Usually there were many to call and many to listen, especially the young dandies who idled long hours away, too long perhaps, walking lazily up and down and every now and then flipping a tiny fan out of an upper vest pocket and fanning vigorously one eye or a nose. Queer little customs they have in the town of the Golden Shell! But alas, off to the War they were gone, many of the vendors, and more of the bravi signorini, and everywhere a fever of fanfares and drums and bands added to an ex-

citement that was as yet more gay than sad. For wasn't Palermo the true foster-child of Garibaldi, and who more glad or eager than her young sons to go and join in the freeing of Italy's ancient provinces? Hadn't Sarina, from her littlest babyhood, heard old Lola tell wild tales of "the cruel Austrian" yoke—tales too savage and too cruel, indeed, for such a little girl to hear, but tales that had made of her as fierce a small patriot as her cousin Rita in her far-away Firenze?

In the Villino Verde real anxiety rather overshadowed mere patriotic joy. Hadn't Babbo Beppo's brother only two years before been killed in the war with Tripoli, and wasn't pretty Mara all white with anxiety over the possible fate of her new young husband?

Out in the garden where grew the great camellias—flowers like giant white-and-rose-winged butterflies asleep against the waxen leaves,—out in the garden, under the pergola now sweet with countless roses, little Sarina sat one morning, huddled in lonely, despairing

grief. In vain her mother strove to comfort her, in vain Mara forgot her own troubles and tried to find out why the child was so distracted and distressed. At first Sarina could not speak for sobbing, and then, little by little and word by word, they pieced together the reason. That night, the night before, the child explained:

"I was—I thought I was playing in the giardino. And Lola had harnessed Gigi into the Cart—and we were going for a ride,—and the Principessa Angelica, the loveliest lady on the Carretto, was very nervous and molta distratta—and she had seen a vision. And just then a diavolina flew at her and blinded her in both eyes,—and when the Principe saw it, he gave a loud cry,—and—and then I woke up—and——" Here the child began again to weep so violently that no more could be understood. At that moment, however, Lola came hopping excitedly out from the house.

"Signore! Signore!" she exclaimed. "She was right, our picciuriddu! She saw it com-

ing in her little dream, the blessed child! They have indeed come to take it away!" Here Lola, too, burst into loud and vehement peasant sobs. Mamma Bice rose; quite pale and very straight she stood against the palm tree in whose shadow she had been sitting.

"Lola! Be good and contain yourself! *What* are you talking about?"

Just at this moment Mara had a horrid inspiration. She ran down the garden path to the back wall of the garden, opened the gate leading into the narrow road beyond, looked quickly where Nello's Cart—her Cart, her precious Carretto—had been fastened the night before. The Cart was there but so also were two imposing looking Carabinieri—gentlemen of the mounted police, very magnificent in their uniforms, Nello and Sarina always thought them, with their golden epaulets and plumed hats, and so well matched up in size and shape, for in Italy the mounted police or the police afoot go always—or seem always to go—in

twos! These grand gentlemen bowed politely to Mara who looked at them inquiringly.

"Your errand?" she said, while her beating heart told her she knew it already.

"We regret to say, distintissima Signorina——"

"Signora," corrected Mara a little haughtily.

"Signora—mille scuse! But the government is about to take over for its own immediate use all vehicles, including of course the carretti of Palermo."

"Oh! And what for—and why?"

"They are needed at once to carry this and that up to the mountains of Piedmont——"

"The ordinary carretti—I understand, and that is bad enough, the good saints know. But this little Carretto—it is not just like any other—it was made for me by my little brother. It was made for me for a wedding present." Mara's pretty voice trembled and her soft eyes filled with tears. The Carabinieri bowed respectfully and sympathetically.

"It is indeed a cruel thing,—but destiny is

often cruel, and the distintissima Signora will know and realize, only sternest necessity causes us to act so like thieves and pirates."

By this time Mamma Bice, Lola and Sarina had joined the group by the Carretto, and dumb with surprise, listened further to these plans for their beloved Carretto's future. To little Sarina, it was in reality very much like parting with real people and real pets. Many a conversation had she in fancy held with the brightly dressed little figures on the Cart. A whole world of story and legend had she and Lola together invented about these tiny painted people, and to see them now torn forever from their bright and beautiful Sicilian air—Oh, how could they bear it!

"Ebbene! Pazienza," finally said the first Carabiniere. "Tomorrow, with your permission, we shall come to take the Carretto, and perhaps when they are placed on the bastimenti the Signori will come down to see the sad departure."

Melancholy though it was, still Mara and

Sarina felt it would be rather unsympathetic to let the Carretto go without a suitable farewell. So one tropically hot morning, not long after this, a somewhat tearful group from the villino joined the great crowd down on the Marina, awaiting the sailing of hundreds of carretti. Rich and poor, young and old, all excited, all shouting, and some weeping, the populace of Palermo watched the loading of the vessels and finally the slow steaming out of the cart-laden ships.

"How will they ever stand it!" sighed Babbo Beppo to his wife. But little Sarina, who had caught some of the spirit of excitement and adventure, called out shrilly as the boats steamed proudly into the bay—

"They will see the snow! And they will beat the Austrians." And an old enthusiast standing near the child heard her and his voice started a shout of patriotism.

"Down with Austria—down with tyranny! Evviva l'Italia—L'Italia all' arme."

Whereupon the mob burst into wild singing

of Garibaldi's hymn and if only noise could have won the war, won it would have been then and there. All of which was written the next day and explained in great detail to Nello by his mother, and to Angiolo by Mara, sad but brave, and confident of victory.

CHAPTER X

ONE PERSON'S BIRTHDAY

"NETTA! Nello! Nello! Netta!" called Rita to the other two children one afternoon just after Nello's return from the studio.

"Rita! Rita! What's the matter?" echoed Nello, flinging off his cap and sinking down on the floor with a great pretence of fatigue. Rita's head appeared in the doorway and Simonetta followed close behind her.

"You have forgotten that tomorrow——" began Rita.

"Is Papà's birthday!" added Simonetta.

"Just so," said Rita.

All three sat down solemnly on the cool stone floor and nibbled the roasted melon seeds that Nello offered them.

"I bought them from an old cripple," he said

slightly apologetic. "They are stale like him, poor thing!"

"Tomorrow is Papà's birthday," said Simonetta again, "and he is so serious these days, we must have a festa. We must cheer him up. What can we do?"

"I know," said Rita, "let's go out to Settignano! Let's be some living pictures for him." Rita, like Nello, was always courting reasons for "dressing up."

"We'll dress him up, too," said Nello. "Where's the stuff?"

"What stuff—oh, clothes, you mean?" said Simonetta.

"Out at Settignano there's lots of it. We have always had parties there, and we leave the things with Caterina and Serafo who take care of the farm and the house and cook for us when we go out to stay."

"Splendid," approved Nello. "Now who shall we be?"

"Papà," said Simonetta, who liked things very grand and stately, "Papà should be

Lorenzo dei Medici—Lorenzo the Magnificent —and he can sit and watch the rest of us perform."

"How are you going to perform?" asked Rita.

"Oh, just stay looking like a picture. There's a big gold frame out there that we used once before. We can just step inside that," said Simonetta.

"It sounds easy," Rita decided.

"What kind of things shall we do?" asked Nello.

"What do you mean?" this from Simonetta.

"Oh," said Nello, "things out of our heads, or real people—real things?"

"Real ones, real ones," said Rita. "I would like to be Savonarola—or David killing Goliath. You could be Goliath, Nello."

Nello and Simonetta laughed. "How could you be a man, Rita?" they asked her witheringly.

But Rita never gave in to either scorn or reproach. "I shall be one—somehow. I won't

need anyone to help me. I know where the clothes are,—just where. So there!"

And so they plotted and schemed and finally persuaded Uncle Pasquale to give them all a holiday the next day.

"You see, Nello and I are quite, oh, quite worn out with horrid studies and things, and Simonetta needs some divertimento, too, and you, Papà," teased Rita that night before they went to bed, "you, Papà, should take a holiday. You are getting quite wrinkled."

"Bald, too," grunted Uncle Pasquale.

"But why tomorrow? Tomorrow——"

"Is the best day to go because it is tomorrow," interrupted Rita.

Uncle Pasquale thought he saw a sort of warning look in Simonetta's eyes, so he gave in and agreed to let the next day be a holiday.

The next morning, "Happy Birthday! Happy Birthday!" shouted three gay young voices to Uncle Pasquale, waking him from a broken sleep and banishing anxious thoughts from his rather troubled head.

"Eh! Eh! What's this? What's this?" for a furious rap at the door told him the truth he had quite forgotten. "What do you mean," he demanded, "by reminding me of what an old fossil I am becoming——"

"Old fossil nothing," called out Rita. "Hurry up and swallow your coffee and we'll be off. We're going to celebrate."

"To celebrate!" echoed Nello, and squeezed Farfallino, Lorenzaccio and Otellino till they squeaked and joined in the joyful noise.

"I shall certainly have indigestion if you hurry me so," grumbled Uncle Pasquale, swallowing his coffee a few minutes later——

"And heart failure," he added as they hustled him off to the bus which would take them down to the train for Settignano.

Nello sniffed the bright air and feasted his eyes on the sights that began to be familiar to him as well as beautiful. So many sights to see, to enjoy!

"I think," said Simonetta as they stood by Giotto's Tower, waiting for the train and feed-

ing crumbs to the hundreds of pigeons fluttering about them, over their heads and at their feet, "I think I'd like to be a pigeon when I die and always hover around the Campanile."

"You always think such strange things," said matter-of-fact little Rita. "I don't care to think about flying like a pigeon. I'd rather go up in an aeroplane."

"You shall some day," promised her father, "and you won't have so very long to wait, perhaps!"

Out on the slow and squeaky tram they went, and up the roadway white and winding like most Tuscan roads, and after one last gasping curve the tram stopped and there they were in the small piazza of Settignano.

"Does Nello know what famous man once lived out here at Settignano?" asked Uncle Pasquale.

"I know, I know!" gloated Rita, skipping importantly towards the narrow little street that led up from the square. "Let me tell him. I can," she continued, smiling happily at the

women sitting on the doorsteps of the stucco-walled houses that lined both sides of the street. Smiling women, children big and little, sprawling on the steps or playing games in the shadow, all seemed to give Uncle Pasquale an extra smile and a nod of welcome as he and his little flock passed by.

"Who did live here?" asked Nello, descending from a make-believe unconcern with which he liked to tease Rita.

"Michelangelo, of course!" shouted Rita, feeling she had quite won a victory. "Michelangelo—in a little house you can hardly see from here. They brought him out when he was quite a bit of a baby, and a stone cutter and his wife took care of him and brought him up. There were lots of stone cutters here then, and I suppose Michelangelo learned his first chiseling here."

"He must have been something like Nello," added Simonetta. "He didn't like to study grammar and things like that, and when he went back to Florence he teased his father so

that they finally let him go to study drawing under a great maestro."

Nello sighed heavily and the rest laughed.

"Come, come," said Uncle Pasquale, "it isn't as bad as all that, and this is a day for a festa and here we are at the Villa Gamberaia. And there," pointing up the road beyond the famous row of cypress trees belonging to the great and beautiful Villa, "there is our little farm."

A few minutes more, and they were inside the gate and behind the high wall. Orchards to the right of them, vineyards all about, with their vines fastened at regular intervals to low trees and drooping gracefully between them.

"The vines look like ladies ready for a dance," said Nello, spying Florence behind the cypresses, and the spires and towers of the city gleaming and fairylike in the morning sunshine.

"Come!" called Rita from the doorway of the small, low farmhouse. "Papà will sit in the sun in the pergola and we will prepare for

the celebration. Simonetta has started, and you and I can do the rest."

Such an array of treasures as that old farmhouse seemed to hold—queer bits of old clothes, strange lamps of brass and bronze, half broken plates.

"You see we have always had this place as a sort of a play house," explained Simonetta to Nello. "And Papà has let us bring out all the old things we didn't need in Florence. So it is quite fine for plays and pictures. Now what shall we do?" And the three put their heads together and plotted and planned and finally announced to Uncle Pasquale that after their luncheon he would be invited to a Real Festa,—a Real Party.

If you will only shut your eyes tight for a minute perhaps I, or the Fairy Armanda, or a new and strange fairy—the Fata Morgana—can whisk you over to the little pergola and you can see with Uncle Pasquale the entertainment taking place in honor of his birthday. I mention the Fata Morgana as it is about time that

you made her acquaintance, for she is to play a more or less important part in the rest of this story—the story within a story, you remember! The story of the little painted people on the cart.

Open your eyes now, and there in the dark end of the pergola, what is it that we see? A huge gold frame and in the middle of it a gentleman is standing clothed in a scarlet mantle with a laurel wreath upon his head. A lovely maiden dressed in white is looking away from him although she seems to want to speak to him. Rita's voice—it sounds like Rita's—explains that this is "Dante and Beatrice."

"Of course," murmurs Uncle Pasquale, "I knew it at once."

"Oh, oh!" suddenly wails Simonetta from the background, "we forgot, we forgot! Papà, you are to be Lorenzo dei Medici and your gown is ready in the salotto—and please to put it on."

Fortunately they do not know *we* are here, so we need not dress up. Uncle Pasquale

seems to like it, however, and how quite magnificent he does look as he returns in crimson and black velvet, as grand an audience as one could wish to have. When he is seated once more on his high-backed, old carved chair, the next picture is before us. This time we seem to be rather near to convent walls. For at each end of a little table sits here a friar, there a nun; they seem to wear the brown garb of the Franciscans, and Uncle Pasquale guessing even before Rita sings it out, says,

"St. Francis and St. Claire. And very pretty, too."

It *is* a pretty sight, and Simonetta looks so fair and so demure that Nello quite forgets he is St. Francis and calls out unexpectedly, "I'd like to paint you this way some time, Simonetta." This rather breaks up the picture but Rita throws the curtain quickly over the frame and Uncle Pasquale applauds and rewards with many "Bravi! Bravi!"

There is rather a long pause now, but finally the curtain is drawn aside again and,—

who is this with tonsured head and a most saintly expression on as much of the face as we can see? I say "the face," because while it does seem a little like Rita's, it cannot be hers, for Nello explains,—

"This is Fra Angelico, painting, as you notice, on his knees."

And Uncle Pasquale laughs and exclaims, "Of course! The little rascal! She heard only a few days ago that Fra Angelico was so devout that he always painted on his knees."

And here she is,—monkish robes and monkish wig—but always the same Rita beneath the disguise, daubing red and gold from the palette upon the—well, the—rather remarkable fresco at the back of the picture.

Nello explains under his breath, "She wanted to really paint her own knees but we couldn't let her do that."

"Naturally," says Uncle Pasquale in one of those loud "stage whispers."

"The last picture you must guess!" says a voice from the background.

What will it be?

Uncle Pasquale suggests "Michelangelo's David—No? Judith? Not Judith? A portrait by Raphael? Pope—or Cardinal—or perhaps a Madonnina?"

The curtain again is removed, and, "This is really quite, quite fine!" exclaims Uncle Pasquale, "for this is surely Botticelli's Pallas and the Centaur."

And indeed one can hardly say which is most like the other—Simonetta like the picture, or the real painting like Simonetta. Down at the left someone's quite clever fingers (Nello's perhaps) have splashed the paint about so that no one could fail to recognize the Centaur that Botticelli painted. And back of this, to the right, standing so stiff and straight that she looks quite flat and picture-like, is Pallas, wreathed and serious-eyed, with the real Tuscan sky for a background. I think if Botticelli could see our Simonetta here he would steal her quite away to use for more Madonnas and young goddesses. Who knows but Uncle

PALLAS·WREATHED·AND·SERIOVS-EYED

Pasquale's Simonetta is Botticelli's come to life again? For there was one in Botticelli's day, you know, and some day you will doubtless learn more about her.

"Beautiful! Beautiful!" cries Uncle Pasquale, and the children all come back to life and chatter like magpies, explaining this and that.

"I wanted to be Savonarola or Galileo," Rita excitedly begins.

"She couldn't be them, could she?" says Simonetta a little disdainfully.

"And I would like to have been John of the Black Bands—so!" and Nello strikes a commanding posture that makes everybody laugh.

"You did just enough and it couldn't have been better." And Uncle Pasquale pats everyone on the head and says his birthday is quite the best he ever had.

"Oh, oh!" Here Rita makes a wild dash for the house and comes back almost at once with a basket in her hand. The prettiest sort of a Tuscan basket, too! Flat and low and with an

arching handle all gay with ribbons. There is a little row of bright colored flowers all about the edge of it and it is heaped high in the center with the delicate colored candied almonds that so often are used on gala days in Tuscany. "There's a present somewhere," Rita informs Uncle Pasquale.

"A present! Do I have to eat my way through to it? Help me please!" And they all munch and crunch the sweet almonds. Presently, down in the soft green paper, Uncle Pasquale discovers a little flat bundle, and, drawing it out, he unties the ribbon on it, and "Everybody's pictures!" he says—and so they are! Here is Rita, mischievous, laughing; Simonetta, sweet and serious; and Mara all a bride, with Angiolo by her side; Sarina as she was on the famous wedding day, and finally Nello,—Nello, guess where and how!—on top of the Carretto—all gay and gorgeous in his velvets and silks and brandishing the reins in one hand and a flowered whip in the other.

"Angiolo took it, and Mamma had it made big for you," Nello explains.

"These pictures," says Uncle Pasquale, "are even better than the other ones. And even more alive."

The sun was just going down as they started for home. "Come, bambini," said Uncle Pasquale, "throw a kiss to the new moon and we'll walk part of the way—to Mensola."

Just as they reached the little piazza where the village church stood, they heard chanting voices, and up the narrow road in front of them came a small procession,—the village priest and the village children, singing and bearing flaming candles as they walked to the vesper service of their first Communion day. Rita and Simonetta knelt down quietly, and Nello and Uncle Pasquale bared their heads as the Padre passed them. It all looked quite like an old, old picture come to life—the white-robed acolytes, the Sisters in soft, dark gowns, walking beside the boys and girls. All the girls were dressed in white, and wore fluttering veils on

their little heads, and looked rather scared and solemn; the boys carried lighted tapers and tried hard to look "neither to the right nor to the left," but "straight ahead," as they had been told to do. Flaming torches, chanting voices, old figures and young ones, into the candle-lighted church they passed, and a few moments later the big door closed and they were gone. Outside it seemed suddenly chilly and dark.

"I am cold," said Simonetta with a shiver.

Nello, looking down at Florence far below in the valley, said rather wistfully,

"I heard a man say yesterday that he'd rather die for Italy than live to see her suffer."

"It's worth dying for," said Uncle Pasquale. "Worth living for, too," he added brightly.

"I like just to like her—Italy!" said Rita.

Uncle Pasquale hugged her up to him. "Healthy infant!" he said. "Come, we will run a race down the hill."

CHAPTER XI

MANY TRAVELERS

GOOD-BYE to Monte Pellegrino! Good-bye to the Golden Shell! And good-bye, too, for a time, to peaceful, happy days, to merry festas at the Villino Verde, and to all those strange and pleasant and exciting things remembered by the Little Painted People on our Cart of Many Colors. For their memories, you see, go back not only to yesterday but back and back, one, two—yes, perhaps four or five hundred years! Indeed, no one really knows just when they did begin to remember or even to be, but there certainly has always been in Italy the Fata Morgana, Morgan le Fay, as they call her in England—and I suspect it is she more than any other who has kept the Little People remembering, kept them gay and bright and just themselves even in the

midst of many changes and many new experiences.

Perhaps just here I should tell you a little more about the Fata Morgana, for if I do not do so, some day someone else will,—and theirs might be quite a different story. In the old times, you see, it was thought that the Fata Morgana was quite an unkind Fairy, a beautiful wicked witch. But at the time of our story, she was certainly in quite a glowing state of goodness. This was due, I think, partly to her real and great love for Italy, and partly because she felt so sorry for all that the Little People of the Carretti were going to have to endure in the service of her Italy—and theirs.

Does it seem queer to you that I talk of fairies in an age of railroads and of dreadful, cruel war? Well, you need not believe it in just the way that I do, but you see I am speaking in the language of the Little People, and to them the Fata Morgana is she who reads their destiny, who handles their fate and all that befalls them. In this case she seems to have en-

tered into the affairs of the Italian Government though other people believe it was only the Army that was responsible for those fearful noises that were so new and terrifying to the Painted Princess Angelica and her companions. You and I by now know better. Was it not the Fata Morgana who invisibly superintended the stacking of the Carretti on the long lines of trains? And it may have been she who suggested, in a mean moment, to some stupid officers that you could get more carts in and so save space if you stood each carretto on end and packed them one in another with their poor pretty shafts high up in the air. I say it was she who may have suggested all this to the Italian Army or the Government, but if she did do it, it was not because she wanted her Little People to be hurt, but because Italy, her Italy, must be helped—oh, yes, helped in every possible way even by wooden carts and by speechless Little People who could not, would not always understand. All the way up the shoe of Italy they were taken on these open

train trucks, and neither day nor night could they escape the horrid din of whistles or the horrider smell of smoke. Where, oh where, before, had a Princess Angelica or a Prince Orlando been doomed to such troubles, such strange and shameful treatment? Never did the poet Ariosto, who told their story years ago, imagine such adventures for his hero and heroine.

When the great ship that carried the Carts first landed them in Naples, the Fata Morgana took it upon herself to make a little speech as the vessel lay at anchor in the beautiful bay. Out over the blue, blue Mediterranean you could hear low voices singing, and if it had been in times of peace, the sound of many mandolins and of happy laughter would have drifted merrily through the air. But these were sorely frightened times and Naples had almost forgotten how to sing.

"Now," announced the Fata Morgana, holding her sceptre high up in the air while all the Little Painted People on the Sicilian carts,

listened, listened, listened. "You are of the oldest lords and ladies in the land and this is the hour of our Italy's greatest need. Enemies are behind the mountain peaks and on the sea and up in the sky. There are poor people up in the northern regions, simple, country folk who may soon have to move away from their little homes; and who, better than you, perhaps, can help them keep a few belongings, or bring them food,—clothes, maybe? You are to be taken by trains all the way up to Rome, to Florence and off to Faenza and up to Udine; often you will be stalled and side-tracked for days, for other, more important trains will have to go on ahead of you, trains with troops,—jolly, eager, laughing troops, you'll see! Or perhaps they will be trains full of supplies of all sorts. There will be trains laden, too, with mules, hundreds of them, the poor, patient creatures! Some day those mules will be drawing you across the Plain of Lombardy, through Venetia, towards the Trentino, who can tell! You may get lost but you'll not suffer any more

than all the rest of the world these days."

The Fata Morgana paused for a moment and the Princess Angelica sighed and looked a little bewildered. She was a gentle if a proud lady, and she always wished for quiet, though she never seemed to secure it. The Princes Orlando, Medoro and the rest protested that *they* would much prefer going with the army, into the trenches, up to the Alps,—into the real fighting, among the real warriors. This quite irritated the Fata Morgana.

"You stupid creatures," she scolded, "you are at least four hundred years behind the times. Armies aren't made up just of soldiers, as they used to be; today they are made up of everything,—even postage stamps are a part of the army! And as for you!" Here the Fata looked so stern that everyone apologized and promised to be good. "If you *are* good," said the Fata graciously, "and if you will be patient and will suffer all sorts of hardships and unpleasantness without too much complaining, I will reward you and you shall see something

of this Italy to which we belong. For one full hour out of every twenty-four I will enchant you into invisible travelers, and I myself will be your guide, what the people of today call a cicerone!"

This announcement met with high favor with the Little People, and thanks to some delay in their departure for the north, the Fata Morgana made a brave beginning in Naples as a guide. There she trailed behind her for several days her strange and motley array of invisible travelers. She was a trifle nervous herself as to historical facts, for the rôle of cicerone was new to her and she wanted, of course, to be very accurate and not to misinform any of her flock. She was rather relieved to find that the Little People were most of all interested in just really truly sights,—things living and going on now. The past out of which they had come, was so much more real to them than the present, you see, that today seemed to them a strange sort of fairy story.

The day after she made her announcement,

accordingly, the Fata Morgana began her task.

"This you already know," she explained, waving her hand to the city by the sea. "This is Naples, and that, that smoking mountain, is Vesuvius—a favorite spot with dragons."

She took them into the busy narrow streets of the city and they wondered at the tall, tall buildings and the busy-ness of everything. So many people everywhere! And children, children, elfin-eyed and often dirty. Often, alas, crippled and maimed and poor, and not as happy as children should be, for Naples, as the Fata Morgana tried to tell the Little People, "Naples has suffered so much and so long that even now her bright and happy life is made sad for many because of ignorance and sickness and poverty." These things are like the great black shadows in narrow by-streets and under the forbidding eaves of the old palaces of the great. But this is not all of Naples! Oh, no! Who would not be glad to see the bright, gay colors of the water-front, the fruits

piled in huge heaps in crowded market-places, and the tomatoes set out to dry in every imaginable place in the sun? Clothes dangle on lines high over the street, and often you can find in some unexpected corner a little piazza from which a street of sloping steps goes up and up, and in the piazza a group of ragged children dancing to a beggar's music, or gaily playing games.

The night before they left Naples, the Fata Morgana decided to give her Little People a last and strange surprise. "You are going," she announced, "by the light of the moon, to see the sleeping city of Pompeii. And as you look upon it for one brief, little minute, you shall see a wonder wrought. Look sharply now,—for it will be but for a minute."

Quite on tiptoe with excitement, the Little People stepped softly about the dead, dead city, and in the distance Vesuvius smoked and faintly blazed away.

"You were not even thought of in those Roman days," rather scornfully the Fata Mor-

gana reminded the Little People, "when laughter and music were here and people lived,—and then the terror came and everything was hidden, hidden under lava and under ashes, buried past repair. Until one day, someone digging down found a fragment of building that belonged back in those Roman days, and gradually, bit by bit, the city has been uncovered to the air and to the light."

The moon, as the Fata Morgana finished speaking, seemed to rise right over the fairy's wand, and as she slowly waved it, for one briefest minute the Little People saw Pompeii alive and whole and beautiful—chariots hurrying down the narrow streets paved with great stones, and at the corners the huge stone on which you stood to avoid being run over; busy little shops whose business was carried on mostly outside their four walls; cool courtyards with bright painted walls about them,—a different, different world. Then, as suddenly as it had come, it was gone, and the Little People, waved to sleep, in their carts once again,

knew no more until the next day, the first day of their real journey.

"Up to Rome," said the Fata Morgana, "is the way you must next go. And then——" There she teasingly kept them wondering. As I, in turn, keep you.

"Rome! Rome! What is Rome?" asked one painted dragon of another, a day or so later.

The Fata Morgana, overhearing this, explained a little. "A city set on seven hills, and where each hill seems to be made of many others. The city of Roman Emperors and Christian Popes; once a place of palaces, of temples, of great triumphal arches; then a place of churches, churches, churches, big and little, square and round, some with cloisters and some without—of these the biggest was St. Peter's; villas, too, with famous gardens."

"Let us visit them!" interrupted the Princess Angelica.

This quite pleased the Fata Morgana, for she was not especially enjoying all this traveling in modern ways. "I will show you a few

extremely famous places, and after that, a garden or two, as a reward."

Then she counted off the famous places until everyone was a little dizzy. (Hurried sightseeing always does this to you, you see.) St. Peter's, the Pope's own church, and the Vatican, his own palace, the Coliseum and the Appian Way of Roman fame, the little church of Ara Coeli. This the Fata chose perhaps because she liked the flight of steps leading up to it,—or perhaps because of the famous bejeweled image of the Christ-child which, so the story ran, having once been stolen away by wicked thieves, walked back all alone to its own little place on the altar.

"I will whisk you to a cloister or two or three, —there are so many of them one cannot choose easily,—and you shall climb the Pincian Hill and you shall walk about the ruined Coliseum in the waning moonlight."

She paused quite breathless, and the Little People went suddenly back to the Carts with their eyes and mouths open wide with bewil-

derment at all the names and so many—too many—things to remember.

Had you, like me, been able to put on a wishing cap, you might have seen the Little People marveling at these great historic and wonderful places for one short hour a day during several days. And had you gone with them, I think you might have enjoyed as much as they did their last bit of "sightseeing" in the Eternal City. For this was a morning jaunt and included a glimpse of nothing less than the palace of the King and Queen of Italy.

"You may even have a glimpse of their very selves," said the Fata Morgana, tiptoeing them into the royal quarters. "The King and Queen," the Fata Morgana informed them, "are living with their daughters in only a little portion of this palazzo, the Quirinale, and the rest of the palace is being used for war work. The people love their Queen and King, and the King has been a true leader of his soldiers,—brave and kind and thoughtful. They all seem very fond of him as well and

very loyal—from those mountain regiments that they call Alpini to the lively Bersaglieri, the sharpshooters. 'Savoia! Savoia!' is a favorite battle cry and they say that it brings terror to the Austrians when they hear it."

Just here the Fata Morgana saw the Princess Angelica yawn and yawn, and she was about to reprove her sharply. Then realizing what was before her Little People, she relented. "Come!" she exclaimed, waving her wand, and in the twinkling of an eye they were set down in the midst of the gardens of a famous villa. "I could have chosen for you the gardens of the Vatican, or the Villa Borghese, —and were we in times less anxious and bent only on pleasure, you should have gone to Tivoli, to see the Villa d'Este, or to Frascati or any one of many other beautiful garden places. But this Villa Medici is a favorite of mine."

It seemed, indeed, worthy enough of the choice. Groves of ilex trees, and statues peeping out from dark and shady places, flowers in

rows, and, best of all, lovely fountains making the air cool and musical. The Little People wandered invisibly here and there with happy sense, somehow, of being at home. This was more like the Italy they knew,—a pleasant place, warm and happy and care-free.

But when it was all over and they were again imprisoned on their Carts, the Fata Morgana reproved them just a little. "Italy is not just only that now," she said. "Italy is in need and you are one of her ways for getting out of her trouble."

Of all the wonderful and novel adventures that befell the Little People, none, I fancy, quite compared with the adventure that happened while they awaited orders at Faenza. Faenza, you must know, is towards the eastern coast of Italy and not so far from several famous cities.

"I have promised to show you Venice," said the Fata Morgana, as they drew slowly into Faenza, "and to Venice you shall go,—in fairy aeroplanes and you shall see a strange and a

sad sight. Not only shall you see that City whose streets are waterways and whose carriages are boats, but you shall see it all veiled at night with darkness. For the Austrian aeroplanes are eager to search it out, and while our own brave fighters in the air do all they can to protect the sleeping City, darkness is the mantle Venice must wear from dusk to dawn these days."

That night a long, fantastic line of fairy aeroplanes, which you might have mistaken for dragonflies, appeared at a word of command from the Fata Morgana and whisked the Little People silently, invisibly over the country to Venice, a City of black darkness, of silence and great buildings that one could only guess at in the dark.

"It is the hour just before the dawn," said the Fata Morgana, "and you shall see the City for an instant in the light before you go."

She had hardly finished speaking when the first streaks of sunrise showed in the sky. One by one, the great and beautiful buildings flung

off their black mantles and rose like real fairy palaces in the dawn.

"There is the Church of San Marco," pointed out the Fata Morgana to the excited little travelers. "Its lovely portals are covered with sand-bags and they have taken away the statues from many a place, and day and night everyone prays in Venice that her wonderful pictures may be spared, her lovely palaces not destroyed."

She showed them the Doges' Palace and rattled off the names of half a dozen or more other famous places and then, alas, the time came for a quick return.

The Princess Angelica, somewhat tired, was overheard complaining a little crossly to Orlando. "What is the bridge that she said she would show us? I liked the name—but she forgot. She is at times forgetful."

"Ah! I, too, liked the name," said the Prince sympathetically, "and I remember. Was it not called the Bridge of Sighs?"

"Just so," said Angelica.

"You cannot expect everything in war times," said the Fata Morgana, overhearing the talk and looking very stern. After this, for quite a long time, the Little People on the Carts behaved unusually well, and some of them, at least, finally reaped a reward.

From Udine, which had become a sort of military capital of Italy since the declaration of war on Austria, all the Carts were sent away again, and our Carretto along with some fifty others started off with loads of various sorts, drawn by mules over the fertile plain of Lombardy. Towards no less lovely a place than the beautiful Lago di Garda were they sent. If you had been a certain little boy then, and the Fata Morgana had bewitched you, what a sight you might have seen, one particular night that summer. Over the ribbon-like road that followed the shore of the lake—a white road bordered with great pink oleanders all in bloom—the long, long line of strange-looking carts shone bright and distinct in the moonlight. Off at nearby farms

or fishing villages their mules were asleep or quietly grazing. Then clearly, distinctly and differently half a dozen country campanili struck the always fateful hour of midnight. The last stroke was still echoing when—what a wonderful sight appeared on the edge of the white, white lake and the shining, winding road! For the Fata Morgana had waved her magic sceptre over all the Carretti, and down from their wooden homes they were coming—all the Little Painted People, Saracens, Saints and Sinners, Beasts and Dragons and Princes; lovely ladies in silks and jewels; villains whose power seemed to have rather gone by. A strange and excitable crowd! Occasionally a dragon seemed about to forget himself, but the Fata Morgana saw to it, somehow, that no one came to harm.

"A little exercise will merely do the dragons good." she told an anxious Prince or two.

As the Princess Angelica stepped down from her throne of alabaster, she sighed and leaned a little nearer to her princely companion. She

was always afraid of the villains lurking in the distance. You could see them plainly, wearing their regular uniform—a black mantle and very shining white teeth being the most prominent things about them.

"What sights we have seen! What places we have been in! Such horrible sounds—such terrors everywhere! Oh, if the Fata Morgana would only let us remain quietly at rest for a time,—or put us to sleep until we could see again our lost, our lovely Sicily!" This was hardly noble or patriotic of the Princess Angelica, but she was not used to the hardships of modern ways and modern warfare.

Then all the Little People danced a stately dance or two, and in the distance the Fata Morgana stood and watched them. She smiled and talked to herself a little, and then she touched her wand again and made the strange procession file slowly back, each to its rightful pictured place on the patient, waiting carts.

CHAPTER XII

WAS IT BAD LUCK?

JUST at sunrise the next morning, in fact, there was a great stirring and braying and starting to be seen and heard on the road coming from Lago di Garda up towards the mountain passes of the Italian Tyrol. Among many strange sights to be seen, these days, in some of these higher hill places, none perhaps were more curious than the great lattices and webs of straw hung across the highways to camouflage them from enemy aeroplanes. Under these curious networks passed the long line of Sicilian carts, and as they went further north they began to meet more and more people, the first frightened refugees of the war.

On came these people, some in little groups and others by twenties and thirties, pitifully laden with a few precious treasures and neces-

sities, people whose families had lived for years and generations in the same little town, on the same old farms, doing the same sort of work—tending the fields, raising silkworms, fishing, making famous wines and famous cheese—simple, poor perhaps, but mostly happy, and better off than the dwellers in the more southern parts of Italy. Of these refugees some were fiercely patriotic, many were homesick and bewildered, and most of them were tired and dared to live only from day to day, but all possessed some sort of courage, few complained, and every other person proudly told of a father or a son or a sweetheart or a husband already fighting upon the heights or out on secret seas.

Up and up the winding road our Carretto rolled on, along with fifty or more like it. Presently the driver of Nello's Carretto, a certain Ugolino by name, foolishly whipped the poor mule he was driving, thinking that by doing this he would prevent a sudden stumble and so an upset on a bad piece of road. This

unexpected crack of the whip, however, had quite the wrong effect, for the mule gave a sudden lurch and tipped the Cart over into a ditch at the side of the road.

Crack, crash, bang! Down into a pretty mixture of mud and bundles and mule and driver, fell the Cart. Such a groaning and cursing, alas! as then followed.

"I am surely dead!" Ugolino lamented. "O saints! O holy fathers! O blessèd St. Anthony! I am dead! I am gone! I haven't a whole bone in my body! But if I am not dead, at least, surely Moro my poor mule must be."

By this time a small crowd of other drivers and an officer or two had hurried up to help Ugolino out of his trouble.

"Here! Pull away those wheels, you stupids, you sons of a dozen asses, you turtles, you snails," commanded one officer, calling to the other drivers.

"The mule is kicking like a dying goose," shouted the other officer.

The poor mule indeed was decidedly uncom-

fortable—much worse off than Ugolino, who was presently pulled out from under the confusion and set upon a pile of bundles. He groaned, however, and wailed at great length.

"Oh my nose, Saint Agatha, my nose! Oh my mule, Saint Joseph, my mule! And the Cart, blessèd Angels, the Cart!"

The Cart, it was soon discovered, was by far the worst off of the three. For Ugolino's wounds were mostly scratches and bruises, and the mule, being a tough as well as a worthy beast, when helped up on its four wiry legs, let forth a gentle and comforting bray, answered by a dozen or more of its long-eared comrades on the road. But the Cart was covered with mud, and one wheel was broken off with spokes askew, and it wore every sign of being quite disabled for immediate use. They examined it in the high light of noon, they poked and fussed, and one strong hand after another tried to patch it up for at least temporary use.

"Ma! But! To mend it would be the work

of a little whole week! See here—and here," so explained another driver to Ugolino.

"Best to leave it," said one of the officers, speaking sharply and puffing the stump of a cigarette as he spoke. This greatly distressed Ugolino. He was very proud of the Cart and very eager to have it do its share in the valiant fight against those "assassini, the Austrians." So he begged and entreated the officers, but in vain.

"Better to leave the Cart," they told him. "We can easily have one driver and one mule too many, but not a Cart that is likely to break down and cause the death of a dozen of us when we go over some of the mountain passes ahead of us."

Ugolino, now astride of the mule, with a pack on his back, bade an almost tearful farewell to the Carretto. It had been dragged out of the ditch, through a gate in the wall into a small orchard, where it was propped up by a pile of stones, and there, with disconnected wheels,

looking sadly battered, they left it behind them as the sun went down.

That evening, looking out from the little vegetable garden beside the orchard, where he and his brother often played and sometimes helped their grandmother, a boy of Lombardy saw for the first time the lovely Princess Angelica and the valorous Orlando. And that boy always afterward declared that the Principe Orlando had then and there winked at him in a most friendly way, as much as to say, "Riverito Signorino! Charmed to make your acquaintance!"

Was it mere accident, or did the Fata Morgana have a hand in it? However it happened, the fact remained that the broken Cart was undiscovered by that Lombard boy until several hours after its accident. Perhaps this was because everyone was too absorbed in watching the procession of unusual and so festively painted carts. One would certainly not have imagined such carts as useful, or suitable for the grim and ugly business of war. But

they did their part bravely and well, often bearing heavy loads of this and of that, and, better still, causing more than one quick jest and smile as they filed along in so many new and, to them, curious places. For the Little People of the Carretti were learning something many other and really human people were learning in these days—how different are the various provinces of Italy, and how unlike the orange groves of Sicily is the snow-capped mountain country of the north; so little a country as Italy to be so full of differences, with so long a history of division and strife, and now at last united, pledged to redeeming and to bringing into that united Italy the "lost provinces" of the Trentino. Who wouldn't have been glad and willing to be even only a wooden Carretto if one could help on that cause which meant so much to Italy. But they did look almost absurdly playful, the Carts, and quite harmless, of course, though the officers in command of them often smiled a little grimly to themselves as they warned the drivers not to

touch the articles here or there mixed with innocent looking bundles or food in tins.

"If I should touch one," once explained Ugolino to Moro, his mule, "why presto! who knows! but maybe fifty little bits of you and me would be lying at the feet of St. Peter in Paradise! That would hardly be fair to San Pietro. So—discretion, bestiolino mio," and Ugolino wouldn't have touched one of those bundles for the world. Like many another simple-hearted and loyal Italian youth, he had received his summons to go to the front, and "I never wished to kill a man," he had said as he left home, "but my country calls me and I go. Dunque! (so!)."

And just like Ugolino, so did hundreds and thousands of Italy's sons rally to her call during those first months after her entry into the War. From heel to top of the Boot they came, and from distant America how many Italians came! younger and older, not always understanding it all, but brave and patient and eager to fight for their Italy and their fathers' Italy.

Many of them, of course, had fathers who had served Italy with Garibaldi and under her first King Victor Emmanuel. Those days before 1860 had almost been forgotten when Lombardy and Piedmont seemed a country apart; when Sicily hated Naples, and Venice belonged to Austria, and Rome and Tuscany had only the past to live on. That happily had gone by, and now when Italy called to her sons from the north and the south, the east and west, they came, and willingly, for Italy's cause to them meant not only Italy's but freedom's, and the liberty that all great Italians had longed for and believed in, from the days of Dante until now.

CHAPTER XIII

A MIRACLE

NOW here, I confess, is a secret! One I should dearly like to tell you, but I think I must tease you about it for just a little while. The Fata Morgana knew it! And I know it! And you shall—soon! But not yet! Only this much I will give you as a help towards guessing. The secret is about the boy who discovered the broken Cart by the roadside and who ran shortly after to tell his brother Cesare all about it. Who were these boys? Hush! Now I'll give you part of the secret.

Dolfino and Cesare, boys of ten and eleven, lived with their grandmother up in the little pink stucco house on the stradina that led to the church of San Agostino del Lago. There lived also with them Maddalena, quite the most

important person in the little house. For didn't the good Padre himself say—

"Maddalena,—ecco una brava donna! She is verily a mother and father to those poor, unfortunate orphans, and a daughter could be no tenderer to the aged Signora Luisa."

The old priest often talked in this way to one or another of the villagers whom he might meet on the way to the little church, whose bells rang out many times a day over that spot so peaceful and beautiful. He himself had also been like mother and father to the small boys, for had he not baptized them, indeed, in this church of San Agostino?

"Ohimè! Too sweet she was, truly, to live other than with angels and the blessèd Madonna," he would say, crossing himself and stroking Dolfino's curly head. She had died, sweet lady, some three years before, and her husband, an ardent patriot, had fallen only a few months before in the first attack on Gorizia. For summer had come and gone and winter was approaching. And worse than winter

—alas! Anxious days, less and less soldi in the bank, and higher prices—and the war coming nearer and nearer. Poor old Maddalena grumbled and scolded and petted, all the day long, and made hot sweet wine "to put a drop of strength into the blessèd Signora's old stiff body." The old priest would come daily to give Dolfino and Cesare a lesson in numbers and reading and writing, but he scolded less and was more patient than ever when they "forgot" to learn their lessons.

One day, just at dusk, Dolfino and Cesare ran in from playing tombolo and found the Padre and Maddalena engaged in earnest examination of the broken Cart. There it was, still propped up at the corner of the wall which separated the garden from the road. If you were Dolfino or Cesare, you would jump the six rows of terraces, between the grape vines and under the olive trees, but of course if you were ansiano like the Padre or Maddalena you walked down the steps that were all fringed with violets in the spring and with

bright orange colored berries in the fall. "When you are as old as Nonna, you just sit," Dolfino would explain to Cesare.

So this evening, in the air quite clear, quite cold, the two boys ran down to see what was so interesting their old friends in the Cart.

"Che c'è?" asked Cesare.

"Something that your grandmother wishes to know."

"Which is?" persisted Cesare.

"Have you ever found a name on the Cart?"

"A name,—ma si! Of course!"

Dolfino sprang down from the gate on which he had been swinging. "Here it is!"—and in the corner, in quite beautiful letters of gold and red, Dolfino spelled out the words, "Painted by Antonello Rossi, Palermo." They could not see the date.

"Surely you are right," said the Padre. "And now to tell the Signora Nonna!" They walked up the steps to the house where, quiet and sad, the old lady sat in the window, looking out on the lovely lake.

"Why did you want to know the name, Nonna?" asked Cesare.

Then Nonna explained how she had wondered about those Sicilian Carts trailing by their very own garden. "And now," she said as steadily as her old trembling voice would let her, and watching the boys and the old priest and Maddalena, "now I will tell you something that you, piccinini miei, have not heard about before. Long ago your mother was a little girl in Sicily. There she was born and there she grew up, and there, once, traveling, your father met her——"

"And married her—the blessèd angel—child that she was," put in Maddalena.

"But," continued the grandmother, "her people, who were ardent Sicilians, and mine, who were foolish Piemontesi, had too much of the old blood in them, and neither wished the young people to go away—your mother they thought must stay in Sicily; I—selfish and fond—persuaded your father to bring his bride up here. I promised to love her for his sake, but soon I

loved her for her own. One would have had a heart of stone not to love that creature, so gay, so sweet, so pretty——"

"Beautiful as the Madoninna in San Agostino!" piously said Maddalena, folding her hands and crossing herself.

"It was all so silly,—I see it now—now that I have lost her,—and your father—my son. But we were blind then, somehow, and we did not see that in spite of all her smiles and laughter and happiness in you—her putti—her cherubs—this separation from her family was eating her very life away."

"It did, indeed, beata lei!" said Maddalena.

Then suddenly their Nonna sat up quite straight and strong. "O figliuoli," she said, "how many times I have heard it from your good father. Tuscany was great! Rome was great, and Venice and Genoa and Naples were great! But that was in the old days, and now, we who live in a different time, we who have seen all these separate provinces knit together into one united Italy, we must never fall back

into those old divisions, those old rivalries and jealousies. If there is any good to come to Italy out of this war, it surely must be once again the good of bringing together all her sons as true Italians—not Sicilians—not Piemontesi, but all italiani, e cristiani."

"But I am sure Piedmont is better than that barbarous Sicilia?" grunted Maddalena.

All this was so thrilling to Dolfino and Cesare that they hardly knew whether to cry or to shout. Then, suddenly, Cesare asked his question again,—

"But why did you want to know the name on the cart? Listen, this is what it was." And slowly he said the names, "Painted by Antonello Rossi, Palermo."

The color rushed quickly into his old Nonna's cheeks. "Saints in heaven!" she said. "Say that again."

Cesare and Dolfino chanted the name, "Antonello Rossi." There was a breathless pause.

"It is a miracle," said the Nonna. "Rossi! Rossi was the family name of your mother!"

CHAPTER XIV

SOLDIERS AND SAINTS

MEANWHILE, winter came and went, spring was beginning again, and Nello was still in Florence. It must be confessed that he felt sorely indignant and restless at times because he, too, was not in a military school like some of his boy friends.

"You are not ready or old enough, yet," Uncle Pasquale would remind him.

"I am all of thirteen!" Nello would retort. "And I haven't even the Maestro to work for, now."

"True," admitted Uncle Pasquale, "but these are not times when one can do as one wants, and in all the confusion and difficulties in your own home, your father and mother and I think it is better for you to be here in Florence."

"If only the Maestro were here!" said Nello.

It had been quite the hardest thing of all to have the Maestro leave his studio. Hard, too, for the Maestro himself to leave his pupils and his uneventful, happy life—and Nello!

"I'll be back with victory and the ghost of Garibaldi," the Maestro had said when Nello went to him for his last lesson. "And," he added, "I am forbidden even to tell you what I am going for, or where, but I can be worth a centesimino to my country. What else should I do with my time and this poor head of mine? I do hate to leave you, giovanottino, but you'll go on. And some day, some day——" He paused abruptly and taking Nello by the shoulder shook him affectionately. "Ma! One mustn't praise like a fool or babble like a woman! Be off with you now!"

Then Nello saluted in his best military manner and ran quickly down the stairs, not daring to look behind him. It would have been quite too dreadful to see tears in the Maestro's eyes —it was almost dreadful, he thought, to have

imagined he had seen them. Or was it perhaps his own eyes that were dim?

When Nello reached the villa on the Mugnone that day, Rita met him, brandishing a letter in her hand. What was this she was saying? News from Palermo was always likely to be exciting, but this sounded unusually strange.

"An uncle! An uncle! An uncle!" she seemed to be exclaiming.

"What uncle?" asked Nello, rather bored. He had been hoping for something thrilling about Angiolo. How he envied Angiolo—out on a submarine chaser somewhere on the Adriatic, he supposed.

"What uncle? Whose uncle?" repeated Nello.

"*You* are it," announced Rita triumphantly, and pointed out a line in the letter.

"Your sister Mara has a lovely—a bel maschio, a beautiful baby boy, and it was grandly christened and his name is Angiolino

——" Nello skipped a line here and there and turned the letter over.

"Is that all!" he exclaimed rather disappointed.

"I should think it was about enough," said Simonetta a little loftily.

"I wanted to hear about Angiolo! Don't they say anything about him?"

"Yes! Yes!" exclaimed Rita, and she pointed out the place in the letter. Nello read again.

"Angiolo writes that for the moment he is safe and well, and some day may have exciting news to tell us. But, of course, we have no idea when or where the letter was written."

Nello sighed a little enviously. "I don't mind being an uncle," he confessed. "In fact, I think I rather like it. But I'd much rather be an officer or——"

"An aviator!" cried Rita, whose greatest wish in the world was to ride in an aeroplane.

"This is the day to take things to the hospital," Simonetta reminded them. Nello and Rita groaned a little.

"It seems so silly,—just to take them oranges and fruits and all that stuff," said Nello. "Don't you wish we could do something else?"

"I write letters for them, sometimes," Simonetta said a little proudly.

"I have an idea!" suddenly exclaimed Nello, and he danced Rita around the salotto with a happy whistle of inspiration.

"Which is?" asked Simonetta, joining in the dance.

Nello stopped short, put his first finger sharply in the middle of his forehead and pretended to be thinking very hard. Rita looked at him for a minute and then tickled him suddenly and brought him down with a giggle from his orator's pose.

"Rita, do stop," said Simonetta.

"This is my idea," explained Nello good-naturedly. "You saw the other day how the Signorina Bianca was teaching some of the convalescent men to do things like mathematics and writing and grammar."

"Are you wanting to be a professor?" teased Rita.

"Perhaps," Nello admitted. Then he continued, "What I thought was this: Let us ask permission to tell the poor creatures about some of the things they don't know and that we like."

"As for instance?" asked Simonetta.

"Oh," said Nello puckering up his brow, "I might tell them the names of some famous artists."

"I could find out how much they knew about famous families and people," said Simonetta, feeling quite important.

"And you, Rita?" asked Nello turning to where he supposed she was. A smothered laugh came from behind a curtain at the other side of the room.

"You and Netta are so wise," she said a little mockingly, "what is there left for me to do? I am only a little poverella." Here Rita naughtily caught up a scarf lying near and pretended

to be a little begging nun. The next minute she clapped her hands and exclaimed:

"I know! I know! I can tell them stories."

"What stories?" inquired Simonetta, who knew Rita's collection of stories and was somewhat doubtful as to whether grown-up soldier men would enjoy them.

"Never you mind," said Rita. "I shall have good ones. Wait and you'll know!"

Quite excited, and full of plans for carrying out their project, the three children went out that afternoon to the hospital to which their regular and most frequent pilgrimages were made. This especial hospital had started as a small private one, but had done such fine work that it now ranked as a permanent building and received many of the most severely wounded patients that were brought to Florence. The building itself had once been a celebrated old villa, and it was strange—pleasant, too!—to see the altered use of the great stately rooms with huge casement windows, beamed and painted ceilings, and beautiful mirrors still

hung in some of the small rooms. Neat cots lined the white walls, and nurses were always softly and quickly going in and out. The children were allowed on certain days to go up and down the wards, and in this way became quite well acquainted with some of the recovering patients. Later, these convalescent men would surprise them by being discovered no longer in the ward but out in the lovely garden, just happy to be alive and able to be propped up in the sun.

"One doesn't mind being without a leg or a toe or a bone or two if one can only smell the air again and feel the sun. One was cold and wet and frozen so long sometimes up there in the Alps, Signorino!" And a complaint like this was the only kind the children ever heard. The soldier who made this one to Nello half apologized after he had spoken. "I don't mean one disliked it so; you rather wished you had more legs and more arms."

"To get broken?" asked Rita roguishly.

"The Signorina is a biricchina," said the sol-

dier, quite pleased. "She is like my own little sister—the youngest one." Then, as though he remembered suddenly, he said quite simply and quite heart-brokenly, "And the gentilissima Signora told me the other day that no one knows now what has become of her. She was with my mother and two little brothers near Venezia. They are lost now, lost, lost."

"You will find them when you are well," Nello quickly assured him.

"I shall try all my life," said the soldier.

"You will find them," repeated Nello.

Just then, Simonetta, who had slipped away for a few minutes, came quickly towards them, looking flushed and happy.

"We may do it! Whenever we please! The Signora in charge gave me the permesso."

"Good! Good!" said Nello, and turning to the soldiers nearest him, he told them there would be a surprise for them. "Instructive and amusing," he finished up with a mock solemnity. The soldiers winked at one another. They all had a great fondness, somehow, for

this black-haired Sicilian boy with his eyes now dreamy, now merry. "He has a rare heart," they would say to themselves when he had gone.

About a week later, when the three children arrived at the hospital, they were told to go at once to the garden.

"You will find your pupils waiting for you," said one of the head nurses with a twinkle in her eye. And there, to be sure, they were,— three little groups of a few invalids each,— some with a pad and pencil and some just happily expectant. The children felt a little nervous.

"You go first, Nello," said Simonetta, pushing him forward a little. Nello went slowly towards one of the groups.

"I thought," he began, "you might like to hear a few things about some of our illustrious artists. My own maestro sometimes has told me of them and I have seen some of their greatest works. Perhaps you might like to see them, too. Oh!" and a new idea came into his

busy little head—"When you are well, perhaps some day the nurses and Uncle Pasquale would let me take you to see some of my favorites."

This idea seemed to be instantly popular. "The Signorino will instruct us well! We—we four—came from little places where we did not have, perhaps, more than a barrelful of education. We can easily stand more. Besides, pictures—pictures seen and enjoyed—I have heard say have great power to refine and elevate a man."

"That is so," agreed Nello. "I think I had better begin." And from a little portfolio that he had been carrying, he drew out a number of photographs and some colored pictures.

"Ah! What a lovely lady!" exclaimed the soldier nearest Nello. "Who is she?"

"She! Don't you know her? Monna Lisa—Leonardo da Vinci's beautiful Gioconda? My maestro says he likes Leonardo best of all the great men; he says Leonardo is as far above the rest as day from night, because he was so great in everything,—painting and sculpture

and writing and engineering. He brought beauty, it was said of him, to everything he touched. He was greater than Raphael and greater, *we* think, than Michelangelo—though, of course, he didn't do so much."

"I have seen several works by Raphael," said one of the soldiers modestly. "On Sundays and festas I and my chum—we used to visit the galleries. Dio mio! How many miles of pictures and statues! But some were very beautiful, and the Madoninne of Raphael pleased me always. Such sweet, gentle creatures and the bambini like any living child!"

"Here in Florence," said another soldier, "we have been told that there are so many things to see——"

"Yes, yes," said Nello, "Michelangelo's wonderful statues in the Medici chapel,—and Brunelleschi's dome of the Duomo,—and, oh, Donatello's wonderful singing bas-reliefs for the choir of the Duomo,—and Della Robbia's, too,—and all the blue and white terra cotta bambini of the Innocenti."

"The Campanile of Giotto!" exclaimed a soldier, turning over a picture in his hand. "In my paese there are many works by Giotto. I am from Assisi!"

"Assisi!" repeated Nello, quite overcome. "Saint Francis's Assisi,—where all the frescoes are, about the Saint and lovely Lady Poverty."

"Lovely Lady Poverty!" said one mischievous-eyed soldier. "Perhaps she was lovely in those days. She seems a bit ugly now —rather a bad companion. I have seen almost too much of her. Doubtless it was different in those ancient days."

Just then a burst of laughter came from the opposite end of the garden, where Rita was entertaining her little group of convalescenti. In another corner Simonetta was sitting quite like a little queen, and as he watched her for a few moments, Nello thought to himself that perhaps they were listening more to Simonetta's voice than to what she was actually saying.

As they walked home, Simonetta explained that she had given them a "very little lecture"

on the great families of Florence. "I told them," she said, "about the Medici; about Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Giuliano, and how the Pazzi conspired against them and killed the young and beautiful Giuliano on Easter Day, and wounded Lorenzo. And I told them how Lorenzo befriended all great scholars, and how he loved to play with his children in all sorts of games. And how his little boy, Piero, studied Latin and lots of other things when he was only six years old. And I told them how Lorenzo died at Correggi——"

"Did you tell them about the great feasts and gaieties they used to have?" asked Nello.

"Of course," replied Simonetta. "And how that stern old Savonarola was inclined to be very hateful. I never did like him,—such an ugly, sour-looking old priest."

"Why, Netta!" exclaimed Rita and Nello.

"Well, he *was* ugly even if he was good. Next time, I'm going to tell them about the Pitti family and the Strozzi, maybe."

"Do you think they thought it was silly?" asked Nello with a few misgivings.

"They liked mine, I think," answered Rita. She would have been sure of it could she have overheard them talk that evening in the hospital ward.

"Holy Heaven!" one soldier was saying to another, "what a child! Did you hear the story about the blessèd Saint Peter and his two sisters?"

"No, no, tell it to us," said another. And the soldier may have changed it, oh, just a very little, but it was pretty much as Rita had told it, after all. "It began this way," said the soldier, speaking with a somewhat lisping accent. "Saint Peter had two sisters. And of these, one, it may be said, was very skinny and very pious. And nothing would content her but that she should become a holy nun, which she accordingly did. The other, however, was round and pleasant-spoken, loved the world, and declared herself quite of a mind to marry. Presto! A husband is found,—she has many

loving children and her life is busy and happy from end to end. The next scene is at the gate of Paradise. Saint Peter is sitting on the other side, dangling the keys of Heaven—great gold, shining keys (the child said). Says Peter to himself, 'My married sister must be coming up here today. Did the blessèd Lord not tell me to open the door just a little to let some relative of mine come in? That's that worldly sister of mine.' And Peter peeked through the gate. A minute after,—O what a squeaky little knock he hears. One could hardly hear it. And what a thread of a crack he opens and peers through. 'Bless me!' he says, 'what can it mean?' For there was his little saintly sister, quite shriveled up with virtue. A few days later: 'Peter,' says the blessèd Lord, 'have ready bells and trumpets and a fine welcome! Fling wide the gates of Heaven and let in the one who next knocks with joy and music.' 'What splendid saint can be coming!' thought Peter. (You should have seen the child chuckle here!) 'Saints and sisters!' exclaimed Peter a minute

later. For here came the fat sister, smiling, happy and ready for Heaven after a long and busy life. Flowered and ruffled and puffed was her frock and a large and bulging bag dangled from her arm, ready for knitting or mending, no doubt. Peter let her in and gave her a good welcome, 'heavenly cakes and apples of Eden' (said the child). But Peter felt a little uncomfortable. 'You can never tell,' he said to Saint Mary Magdalene, who happened to be standing near, 'just how things will go. One can get into Heaven in so many different ways.' "

They all agreed that this was a very good story.

"I think the other was even more spiritoso and more surprising," said a merry-eyed, middle-aged fellow from Tuscany.

"How so?" asked the man next to him.

"Ma! But, you see, such a wise explanation of why the world is divided up into the rich and the poor. Heaven knows there should be a good reason for so common a fact!"

"Tell us the story," they insisted, and the Tuscan repeated Rita's second little tale.

" 'It was in the days of Adam and Eve' (said the child). 'In the Garden of Eden'—(a garden which she thought must have been not unlike the Boboli, but a little wilder, perhaps, with more flowers and a few savage animals here and there)——

"To give it an Oriental flavor, perhaps," interrupted another merry-eyed soldier.

"Perhaps," continued the Tuscan. "At all events there lived Adam and Eve, and certainly at this time they were happy and blessed with a flourishing family, for according to the story they had twenty-four children, no more, no less. And all were hale and hearty and like any other children that you might know in your village or mine. One day, it seems, Adam received a message telling him that the blessèd Lord was to come to see him that very afternoon. Immediately on receiving the news, Adam flew to Eve and they both agreed that probably the Lord would graciously bestow a

present or two on their family if all behaved wisely and well. 'But,' said Eve, crafty and foresighted as usual, 'it might be wise for us to show only half of our family this time. Twenty-four is, after all, a good many to display at once,—perhaps it might even seem presumptuous for us to do so!' They thereupon hid away quite out of sight and hearing, twelve of the children. Presently our blessèd Lord is seen approaching. Adam and Eve graciously greet Him and minister to Him, and when He asks to see their family, out come twelve children, all quiet and well-mannered and set in a little row, like a flight of steps, against the wall of their casina. 'A fine lot of children, truly,' said the King of Heaven, and from his pocket drew a bag full of ducats of pure gold. 'You shall never know want,' and into each willing hand he thrust a nice fat pile of ducats. And then, having received long and repeated words of gratitude from all the children and from Eve and Father Adam, our Lord departed. But the children who had been hidden away came forth

weeping and empty-handed, for to them had nothing been given and to them nothing came. In vain did Eve bewail and in vain did Adam scold. 'You see,' he told her, 'what comes of hiding things from the Lord. Not only did he give without being asked to twelve of our children, but more and more,—and to these others came nothing, nor will they ever know ease or prosperity.' And Adam spoke the words of a prophet, for ever since then the world has been divided into the descendants of the two groups of children. From the twelve to whom God gave the golden ducats have come the rich men of the world, but the children of the empty-handed twelve have been forever poor, and forever will be so. 'Amen,' said the signorina, and all of us echoed 'Amen.' "

CHAPTER XV

ANOTHER DEPARTURE

ALL this time, down in Florence, most people thought the war was coming quite close enough. Wasn't almost everybody's brother or father or husband gone? Didn't wounded soldiers or refugees arrive almost every day? "The poorer we are, the poorer we shall be. He who has little gets less!" one old Tuscan might be heard saying to another any day. One hardly had time to feel frightened. Besides, you never let yourself whisper the thought even to your own, own shadow. Florence had little cause for fear or for complaining, compared to some other places in Italy. Up in Lombardy, didn't the rumble of actual fighting seem almost to knock at one's door? Especially at no less a door than that of the little house on the Lago di Garda. To be sure,

birds sang in the garden, the orchard bloomed, the chestnut woods flowered and leafed. Distant hills still rose like enchanted sentinels beyond the diminutive Scaglieri palace on its own little island in the lake. Tower and moat and all were there, as though anchored on some invisible boat, waiting for—who knew what! The Fata Morgana knew, you say? Perhaps! Perhaps!

To poor Cesare and Dolfino, not only had sorrow come, but uncertainty as well. Who could tell what might happen to them in a month's time,—sooner, it might be! Had not the blessèd and dear, kind Nonna gone up into Heaven? Were they not almost quite alone in the world now, with only old Maddalena to care for them? And, dear me! Wasn't she quite worn out with all those long weeks of nursing, quite distracted with wondering and worrying about the future?

One day, Dolfino burst into the kitchen where Maddalena was preparing dinner, a soup made, she would say, out of water and salt and

—an idea or two! with a salad of periwinkle leaves for dessert.

"Maddalena! Maddalena! I have a thought! A good thought! Listen!" exclaimed Dolfino, sniffing the soup hungrily as he spoke.

"Better an empty pocketbook than an empty head," remarked Maddalena, still chopping bits of green stuff into the soup.

"Are you giving us grass?" asked Dolfino suspiciously.

"At least it will be hot and seasoned—whatever it is," said Maddalena loftily.

"Now be gentle," begged Dolfino, throwing his arms suddenly around the poor old bent servant.—One must have somebody to hug and there could easily have been a worse somebody than Maddalena!—Maddalena shrugged her shoulders and pretended to be much offended.

"You're spoiling the soup! You're ruining my looks! You're wasting my time!" she muttered in spurts and starts.

"Don't scold," wheedled Dolfino. "Listen to

my little thought,—such a nice, gentle, useful little idea, Maddalena! The Padre told me a secret this morning. He told me that the enemy is surely coming, and soon, soon, Maddalena. Soon, he said, we shall have to leave or be swallowed whole, I suppose, by the Austrians. Wouldn't I scratch as I went down!"

"I'd tear their teeth out at the roots," added Maddalena fiercely.

"Well, you wouldn't expect to just stay here and let yourself be swallowed even for the fun of scratching and tearing, would you?" said Dolfino.

"Holy Heavens, of course not," answered Maddalena. "But where, in the name of the blessèd Saint Joseph, would you have us go, and how, please, young wise man?"

"Here is where my Little Thought comes in," exclaimed Dolfino joyfully. "Let us *mend the Cart* and go on that! We have nothing else now, since you sold our wagon. And we still have Gipetto."

"Heaven preserve the blessèd old mule. At

least we have him," mumbled Maddalena. Then, she slowly stopped cutting off the periwinkle stems and looked out on the lake. Dolfino looked, too. Far away they could distinguish a black streak crossing the sky. Then another and another. Dolfino knew them now to be aeroplanes. But to Maddalena they looked more like omens of bad fortune. She nodded her head two or three times and then she said,

"It is a good little idea. It is almost an inspiration. Saint Agostino must mean to be kind to us. We will get old Maso the Carpenter to help us. And then, whatever comes, we shall have two wheels as well as our own poor legs to remove us from the sons of Satan!"

It was not such a difficult task after all, to mend the broken Cart, but old people and children don't always work as quickly as they might. Every day they did a little here and a little more there and at last it stood up again, as sound as ever, though far from being as

beautiful. The boys had spent many an hour puzzling out the story once painted so brightly, and now so pathetically scratched and almost gone in places. Dolfino had even succeeded in making the good old priest spend a precious hour—and more—trying to discover what all the figures and pictures were about.

"I think," said the Padre finally, screwing his eyes up quite tightly and holding his huge eyeglasses at arm's length from him, "I think they must be the stories that are related by our illustrious poet, Ariosto. I think they are scenes from the life of Orlando Furioso."

It undoubtedly would have pleased the Little People of the Cart to be recognized in spite of their deplorable appearance. One always likes to be recognized for what one really is. Did Angelica think herself any less a Princess because her shining robes were smeared and stained? Did Orlando not wear a noble face, though it was scratched and spotted? What if a dragon might be minus a tail or an angel without a wing? They themselves were still the

same. Indeed, if I must reveal another secret, they themselves were all happy and asleep at this time in the fairy-like palace on the Lake, and only their merest outside of them stayed on the Cart, fooling every passer-by. How did she do it? Who shall say! The Fata Morgana has many magics with which she brings things to pass.

"They shall rest and be happy a little while," she had said when she marshalled them over to the Palace, "just a little while before——" And she suddenly put her forefinger over her mouth. "I have such a silly way of thinking aloud," she said.

"She almost told us," whispered Orlando to Angelica.

Soon after this the wildest rumors began to reach the little countryside by the lake. Ignorant, simple people were all that were left, for the most part, in the fertile plain and the now neglected farms and villages. People, too, so accustomed to living quietly and peacefully that they did not easily or willingly yield

to the fear of an approaching enemy. But when the bombs began to fall on towns whose names you had heard, and to which your father or uncle had once gone, why then the enemy did begin to seem suddenly near, too near.

One morning, in his little church of Saint Agostino del Lago, the good Padre told his people that they must no longer stay where only destruction and disaster might overtake them. "Some day," he said, while his voice trembled, for he loved them all,—were they not his children as well as God's children and the blessèd saints'? "Some day you will come back. But now, it is wise, it is necessary that you should go. Your lives must not be wastefully lost. You must be ready to return when the enemy has been forever driven from our own, own beloved country. For you to stay here any longer would only be foolishness and wrong. In these days one must be wise as well as brave. See! I have a great treasure to show you, when I have given you your blessing."

A few moments later, there, in the candle-light, shining all golden and glorious on the altar, the old Padre received from the hands of Dolfino and Cesare the cherished banner of the tricolor which had been hidden away for so long, so long, in the little sacristy of the church. It was an old, old banner, and it had waved proudly against the Germans as far back as four and a half centuries ago! It had waved again for a great cause when Lombardy and Piedmont had raised their banners for the House of Savoy and had seen Victor Emmanuel the First begin the victories that led to the uniting of all Italy. You need scarcely be told, then, what a proud moment it was for Dolfino and Cesare to lead it towards the altar to be blessed again by their belovèd Padre. In their spotless—if ragged!—choir robes of white they stepped up slowly, and a hush came over the awed little congregation as the priest blessed the banner and sprinkled it with holy water.

When the service was quite over they car-

ried the flag out to a new and stalwart pole that stood in the tiny piazza by the lake. And there, amidst boyish shoutings and cheerings, it was floated from the staff, and, said Dolfino to Maddalena, "Who knows what it may do for us? It might almost work a miricle!"

That night, on a little bridge far up the road, a man was seen bending down in a strange and suspicious fashion. And just in time, the sentinel in charge fired into the dark and killed the Austrian who had been about to blow up the bridge. This news sped like wildfire about the Lombard countryside. If you had been blessed with magic spectacles, you could have seen a little later all of the inhabitants of our little village of Specchio. Some were on mules, some in carts, most of them were old, many of them sad, but two at least rather excitedly and proudly headed the procession. These were none other than Dolfino and Cesare in the Cart of Many Colors. And with them was old Maddalena driving the mule, and muttering a fresh groan, and a fresh prayer to a different saint, at every turn in the road.

CHAPTER XVI

AN EXCITING MEETING

SUMMER had come and gone, and from the Villino on Lungo il Mugnone one looked towards Monte Morello over the little leafless willow trees whose boughs had been made brown and golden by the first frost. But the frost comes slowly to lovely Tuscany, and there were still many days for picking figs, crimson, purple and white and green, out at Settignano near Michelangelo's home, or perhaps still better ones at Carreggi, there in the very shadow of the Villa where the Magnificent Lorenzo dei Medici had lived and died. There was little time or inclination for anything but work or war these days, but one beautiful October morning Uncle Pasquale, coming home on a few days' leave from government affairs, looked at pretty Simonetta as she came

in from her usual afternoon at the hospital and said,

"Hui! White and peaked! So! Signorina! Tomorrow we shall go for a festa out to the Villa Emilia."

"Oh, joyful!" said Rita, always ready to give up work for pleasure.

"You never have seen our Tuscan wine-making yet," said Simonetta to Nello. "You remember how it rained last year when we planned to go!"

But there was no rain this time, and for all one day the little group almost forgot the war, forgot the present and lived in a sort of dream of Tuscany in its great old famous days.

"I feel ashamed, sometimes," said Simonetta, "when our good Inglesi friends ask me things about our great Florentines. They seem to care so much more than most of us Italians do."

"Perhaps," said her father smiling.

"I think," said Nello, "they love Italy mostly for what she has been. And so do we. But

not only for that! We love Italy for what she always is and will be, don't we? The officers tell us that every contadino would gladly die for her—her lovely lands—her mountains—her gardens—her—her——" the boy choked and felt ashamed of himself. He had seen so many of those simple, uneducated but utterly loyal peasants, common soldiers, blinded, crippled, so often patient, even jolly, but mostly patient, used to doing hard things, not understanding reasons, a little apologetic of their ignorance, but so sincere, so honest, and unaffected.

"Yesterday," said Nello, "a Tenente of the Infantry told me how he liked to talk with the poor ordinary soldato. 'They are the real heroes,' he said. 'Though sometimes they look droll enough. I remember one,' he said, 'who was as funny to look at as a lean yellow monkey or donkey,—so thin, big-eared and muddy!' The Tenente asked him lots of things and he could hardly answer any of them. He couldn't much more than read and write. 'I asked him

what his battalion was. He didn't know,' said the Tenente. 'His colonel? His major? He didn't know. Then,' said the Tenente, 'I asked him, "What do you know—anything?" ' And now comes the best of the story, the Tenente said. 'Many things we don't know,' the soldier told him. 'We do know one thing—we are here to go forward.' 'And they *do* go forward,' the Tenente said. 'I have seen them when the word comes "Avanti"—out of the shelter, stormed by the cannon—fearless! They are the ones who go forward. *They* love Italy.' "

All this time Uncle Pasquale and the three children had been riding in the little diligence that twice a day carried some ten or a dozen passengers from Carreggi to Florence and back again. Four or five were all that ever used the little rickety vehicle now—if even that many. But today the fine weather was evidently suggesting country investments to the thrifty, and opposite our little group were three

other travelers, two old men and one old woman.

"It's little wine they'll make this year."

"It's none they'll make next. Soon we shall neither eat nor drink but feed upon the charitable air——" Nello and the two girls laughed at such pleasant notions.

"The Signori are perhaps going to the vintage at the Villa Emilia. It is near my own podere. Perhaps you will stop and taste my figs."

The diligence, drawn by a pair of war-fed and sadly skinny horses, clattered up the huge cobblestones of the little street—the only street of Carreggi—and everyone stepped down in the shadow of a large square Villa. Over the high walls on either side tea roses, climbing in slender vines, were still sweet and blossoming. In through the gate one passed to olive trees in rows above the waving maize. The gnarled and twisted and almost black fig trees were heavy with fruit, and the gathering of the fruit was being done by a group of old

men and young boys and girls. In the stone-paved court-like space around which ran the farm rooms were piled great baskets of Tuscan straw, heaped high with fruit—here a load all crimson, there a pile of white ones, green figs, and there were golden yellow ones, too. In the corner also there were heaps of zucchi squashes and rows of tomatoes drying in the sun on the stone ledges of the windows. At the other end, two women sat spinning in the shadow, and in the distance one could hear tramping and a strange mixture of human voices with the squash, squash, squash of feet upon the grapes.

"This," said Uncle Pasquale, "is almost the only place where they still do it in the old way. In fact, they had installed new and better schemes a couple of years ago, but only the young men know how to use them, and since only the old are here today, they have gone back this year to the old and ancient way."

"You promised," said Rita, running up to her father, "that we might go with the rest to

help pick the grapes. They are waiting for us."

There indeed was the wife of the farmer, thinner, older and sadder-looking, thought Uncle Pasquale, but still with a guitar in her hand ready to lead her little procession of grape-pickers. Everyone carried a basket—big or little—and a rough pair of shears. Lucia, the padrona, sang as she led the way, and presently they came to the terraces where already other peasants were at work.

"These vines, you see," said Uncle Pasquale, "are planted low in the French way, not hung from tree to tree. It is a better way but perhaps not so pretty to look at."

"You put your grapes into your own basket," said Rita to Nello, feeling very wise and important, for she had done this before, "and when it is full you carry it to the end of your row of vines and empty it into the big basket there."

"White grapes first!" sang out Simonetta,

and they all fell to work as though they were true contadini born.

"What are they doing with those grapes over there?" asked Nello of Uncle Pasquale.

"Those which the men are carrying back to the Villa?"

"Yes," said Nello.

"Those will be kept in the sun on great cane trays for several weeks. They are for the vino santo, the purest and best quality of the wine. Today we are picking the white grapes. When those are gone they will pick the great black ones and add them to the juice of the others to make the fine color."

All the bright morning they worked, and at noon feasted merrily on a welcome lunch brought from the Villa. Then, after an hour's rest, back to the vines they went until the time came for leaving.

When they came to the Villa, the sound of tramping feet was louder than ever and the children could hardly get quickly enough to the scene of the wine treading. High off the

ground, in the middle of an open sort of court, was the huge winepress. A dozen or more jolly faces appeared, bobbing up and down, so that now you saw them and now you didn't, over the edge of the great stone vat. The purple juice spilled over the grey edge of the vat and oozed slowly through the large metal strainer into the great trough which received the strained juice. As the trough filled up with the bubbling wine, two or three old men would dip it out into huge copper pails and carry it over to the barrels, where it would be kept for a while before they bottled it up for the winter.

"It's almost empty," said Lucia, watching the juice run slowly, slowly into the trough. "My boy, Ovidio, will put the rest of the pulp and all through the new press we have. That will make more vino,—not so clear or fine, but still not bad,—good enough for the poor and the thirsty!"

"How strong the wine smells!" sniffed Simonetta.

"And how purple it makes the stones!" said Nello. "The shadows are purple, too!"

"And I am hungry!" remarked Rita. Lucia was all apologies.

"A thousand pardons! I forget everything these days. My head has to be head and feet for so many! You will eat a bit of polenta and have a glass of acquarello (half-wine) before you go!"

And before they could say a word, she bowed them into the old, old kitchen with its walls of stone and the ceiling of broad, dark beams. From the beams, bunches of Indian corn looked like golden fruit as the afternoon sun came in great streaks of light through the open doorway. Golden pumpkins and shining copper made the simple cupboard bright, and on the wall opposite the doorway a small picture of the Madonna was lighted by a tiny oil lamp on the shelf below it, while a bunch of lavender gave the air a faint spicy odor as one passed by. Lucia, her yellow scarf still tied over her thick hair, hurried about, and presently, over

the smouldering logs on the great stone hearth, she was toasting slices of polenta on a strange old gridiron. Coarse, black bread and a bit of "half-wine" from the wicker flask poured into some brightly painted pottery mugs, this was their lunch.

"Country fare and country appetite make the best of feasts!" declared Uncle Pasquale, looking at Nello, who had gone over to the doorway and was standing there with the look in his eyes of one who sees visions somewhere far away. Impertinent Rita came up and broke off his dreaming with a little word of Tuscan scorn.

"And what is it you see now, O Signorino bello!
Fiore di zucco
Giallo e bello!"
("Pretty boy! Pretty boy!
The squash has a flower
Pretty and slender just like you!")

Nello laughed pleasantly but the far away look hardly left his eyes. "I was thinking," he said, "how much I want all this to stay,"—pointing to the old farm, the old people, the fruit, the women spinning.

"Some people say it cannot," said Uncle Pasquale.

"But that is why I should die for Italy—and why I would want to live for her. Our people—they want too much to be just like all the rest of the world, but I—I want us all—Sicily—Tuscany—Trentino—to be just Italy. Did I ever tell you what Sarina once said when Mamma Bice asked her where she thought the Garden of Eden was—'Why, in Italy, of course!'"

"Only," added Simonetta a little doubtfully, "a good many Italians seem to find another garden over in America—with leaves of gold and fruit of silver!"

"I'd rather have figs," said Nello.

The road back sloped down most of the way, as all roads do that come into Arno-girdled

Florence. Each of the travelers was joyfully laden with fresh eggs, fresh figs, fresh olives, or last year's wine, and as they approached the Barriere delle Cure everyone prepared to be examined by the guard. If one is rigorous and exacts taxes in times of peace, imagine in times of war! Perhaps they were a quarter of a mile away, perhaps less, when Nello looking ahead as he sat up in front with the driver, gave a little exclamation of surprise.

"Uncle Pasquale! Simonetta! Look! See! It is a Carretto Siciliano, I am sure. See!"

It was indeed, cracked and occupied by two wan and almost emaciated boys and an old woman so bent with rheumatism that she could hardly move. One had grown so accustomed to impossible things, impossible miseries and impossible encounters that the men on guard were listening almost indifferently, though not unkindly, to the old woman's inquiries and story.

"A year ago you started, you say,—and you have been all these months getting here!"

"Ma no! Pazzi! Not getting here! Lying in a hospital with groanings and sighings, and the blessed children in the hands of a kind forestiere—what did they call her—an Americana—(an Indian, I think)—or they would surely have died of hunger and cold."

"But why are you here?"

"Because, stupido—sua riverenza! with your pardon!—the signorini have parenti in Sicily, and where else should I go to leave them before I die,—since die I must and who can tell when?"—and the poor old soul groaned again. By her groan you should be able to recognize her! For wasn't it truly,—of course, you know, Maddalena and Dolfino and Cesare. And in a minute more the diligence was up at the Barriere and Nello gave a shriek of joy.

"Santo Dio!" he shouted, bounding out of the diligence and running up to the cart. "Miracle of miracles! It's my Cart!"

"*Your* cart," echoed everyone after him.

"My cart, of course. Yes! See! My

MIRACLE · OF · MIRACLES · IT'S · MY · CART

name, Antonello Rossi—Angelica! Orlando! The Princess, my Prince! The very one. Oh! Oh!" He fairly shrieked with excitement.

The next thing he knew, two pairs of lean little hands were clasping him about the neck, and two boys and an old woman were talking so fast and explaining so hard that no one could make head or tail of a sound. Uncle Pasquale strove in vain to get a word in edgewise.

"Cousins—Lombardìa—Si! no mother—no father—refugees—the sainted grandmother gone, too—but God is good—and the blessed Madonna of Saint Agostino, she is good—and —and——"

"And they are my cousins and this is my Cart," finally proclaimed Nello, mounting up and taking the reins from Maddalena's trembling hands.

"You will let us in now, good Signori, will you not?" said Uncle Pasquale to the sentries. And so, followed by a curious but friendly crowd that increased in numbers as they went,

the Cart of Many Colors found its way into the City of the Lilies, into Dante's Florence, and from months of strange and horrid travel to days of rest and quiet, before the final return to Sicily and Palermo.

CHAPTER XVII

FANCIES AND FACTS

DURING all this time, what of the Golden Shell? What of good Babbo Beppo and Mamma Bice? And Sarina? Do you think she had stayed just the same half-baby, half-child that Nello had left when he went up to Florence? Sarina herself felt tremendously grown up. She wondered, too, when she counted the years—they seemed so like centuries to her, those one, two, three years and more! How, she would think, could anyone remember anything that happened before the War! Sometimes Sarina secretly wanted to hate the War. Had it not kept Nello away? "When the War is over, Nello will come back," Mamma Bice had said. And had it not made her pretty sister Mara pale and thin with anxiety, in spite of the fascinating baby who grew

daily more rosy and like a little kicking cherub? Babbo Beppo, of course, and Mamma Bice were busy day and night, caring for poor contadini who came in steady streams into the city for news of their men at the front, or for some sort of help in these days of direst need. Rarely, if ever, did a procession take place now on the streets or in the piazzettas. Shop after shop had closed up, partly because there was no one to carry on the business, but more often because people did not have soldi enough to buy much save the simplest, smallest amount of food. So little regular occupation was there for the poor and the aged these days that they naturally spent even more time than usual in the churches. In the wonderful little theatres, too, of the Marionettes or Puppet Shows. These Puppet Shows, you should know, have been famous in Sicily for hundreds of years, —quite as famous, indeed, as the Carretti! And in a way, related to them, too. Men, women and children of Sicily go to these Puppet Theatres for week after week, to follow the

story of some famous characters of bygone days. Across the little stage with its simple scenes, the favorite characters of knights and ladies pass. Puppets are often some three or more feet high and are wonderfully made to move on wires and do quite human gestures, while behind the scenes someone meanwhile tells the story in a grand and quite tremendous voice.

When old Lola would begin to worry and fret and fume and find fault with everyone and everything, good Mamma Bice would send her off with Sarina to see a Puppet Show. "The child must be kept happy," she would say to Lola; "one isn't allowed to let children be sad."

"Plenty of them are sad enough and starving enough and wretched, too, these days, curses on Cecco Beppe!" old Lola would retort a little disrespectfully. But she secretly adored going to these adventurous performances with Sarina. It was not always perfectly clear to her just what the story was

about, and she rather forgot from one week to the next, though she had probably seen the story numberless times since she herself had been Sarina's little age.

As they were coming back from a performance one day in October, Sarina was making her usual attempt to tell Lola just how the story went.

"Don't you remember," she asked Lola, "the story on Nello's Carretto? *That* was part of the story in tonight's beautiful tragedy."

"I feel," said Lola, screwing up her eyes and looking as though she would like to pull out her memory as one would a rubber string, "I feel that I am still a little confused. It was clear that the Princess was very beautiful and that many men were in love with her and that this made most of them rather unhappy, not to say unlucky. But——"

"I will tell you once more for the last, last time!" interrupted Sarina. "It was, you see, just this way—and this is the way Nello did it, too. Once there was a very great and power-

ful Emperor and his name was Charlemagne."

"I am acquainted with him," put in Lola.

"Hush!" went on Sarina. "And there was also at the same time a beautiful Princess of Carthage called Angelica. And she was so very beautiful that most men fell in love with her violently and at once."

"One could see that by the way men were always slaying each other most nobly in her presence," added Lola.

"Now, Charlemagne," Sarina continued, "promised that whichever one of two princes —Orlando or Rinaldo—should beat the Saracens in a great battle that was about to be fought, to him should Angelica be given as his bride. But——"

Lola chuckled. "It was the Saracens who won the victory, wasn't it?"

"Quite so," said Sarina, pleased, too. "And then, you see, Angelica ran away and she had all sorts of wonderful escapes from fiery Moors, and first Rinaldo protected her from Sacripante, a bad Saracen, and then Orlando

went quite mad because of his affection for her."

"It was Orlando, was it not," asked Lola, "who was to be seen clothed in a lion's hide, pacing the desert and scratching his eyes almost out?"

"It was Orlando," said Sarina gravely.

"Orlando is not the only one who has lost his wits because of a foolish maiden," Lola remarked.

"But," Sarina went on, "you remember how Astolfo, a noble British Cavalier, hearing of Orlando's misfortune, sought him out to help him, and how, on his wonderful wingèd horse, he flew quite up to the moon and brought back Orlando's brains done up most carefully in cotton."

"I saw him put them back into Orlando's head," said Lola. "And once his brains came back to him, Orlando sprang to his feet, didn't he, and 'I am done with Angelica forever!' he cried to the noble Astolfo. 'It is just as well,' said that gentleman, 'for she is already married

to a quite fine sort of a Moor—Medoro, a gallant prince of his race, to whom she lost her heart while nursing him from the wounds he had received in a fight near Charlemagne's tent.'"

"The Princess Angelica," Lola decided rather knowingly, "always seems to have favored the infidels."

"But Medoro was such a beautiful infidel!" said Sarina, "such jet-black eyes and such wonderful golden hair,—and armor like that which Santo Stefano wears in the holy books!"

"Tomorrow," said Lola, but she did not finish her sentence, for they had reached the gateway of the Villino Verde and Mamma Bice was waving a letter from one end of the terrazzino up over the front doorway, and Mara another letter at the other end. In the middle stood Babbo Beppo, smiling and red in the face.

"What is it, what is it?" said Sarina, forgetting Angelica and Medoro and all the rest.

"It is—that——" began Babbo Beppo and

stopping teasingly. "That Angiolo is a hero!" he added.

"And that," continued Mamma Bice, "you have two new cousins——"

"And that," added Babbo, now good and repentant, since Sarina had scolded him with hugs, "the Cart is found!"

"What!" screamed Sarina.

"Your eyes will come out if you hold them so open," grunted Lola, more spellbound than impressed.

Then from Mara's letter one piece of news was told, and you must thank me if I tell it to you neatly and nicely, rather than all mixed up with interruptions and ohs and ahs and Per Bacco's and all the other gestures and cries uttered by that happy explosive Famiglia Rossi as they told or read it to one another.

Over two years ago, now, it had happened, but Angiolo had never dared tell it before. And this was the story. It was when he was serving on a submarine chaser on the Adriatic, not far from the port of Pola. One day, towards

the middle of May, two and a half years before, you remember, he overheard his commanding Captain say, half in jest, "Someone should float the tricolor at Trieste next week."

"Captain," begged young Angiolo, "let me do it."

The Captain who had spoken more in jest than in earnest at first refused point-blank. But Angiolo begged so respectfully and persistently that finally they allowed him to go off one night in a little boat and land at an obscure spot down the coast. Looking much bedraggled and disguising himself as best he could, he managed to beg an old shirt from one friendly fisherman and various bits of clothing from another, and tying his head up in a worn old cloth, he would hardly have been recognized, he said—even by Mara. Begging his way, he finally reached the outskirts of the city, and as luck would have it, he managed to smuggle himself in without being held up by the guard. "I rather thought the latter suspected me," said Angiolo in the letter, "and I

quite suspected him. His eyes said 'Italy' even if his sword didn't." Once in the city, Angiolo slept—or pretended to sleep—that memorable night of May 23rd in the shadow of a famous old Tower. Happily the moon was in hiding and the night a dark and friendly one. Out from the portico he stepped, just before midnight, and as the last stroke of one old bell and then another told the City that, exactly one year before, Italy had pledged to Trieste her freedom from Austria, the tricolor floated red and white and green in the darkness,—only a great black wing then, but bright and like a miracle in the sunshine of the following day and in the hearts of the frightened but longing Italian population. In the dark as he had come, so in the dark Angiolo stole away, and no one ever knew how the flag had come there. Certain death would have followed the discovery,—but who would have guessed that the old grey-haired fisherman stealing into a scarlet-sailed boat, away down the coast a week or so later, was none other than our young Angiolo,

and that it was he who had floated the flag? His shipmates greeted him with shouts and cheers as he told them his story. "But," he wrote, "it was really a lark after all. I always did enjoy putting on powder and wigs and being 'altra persona,' as most of you will remember."

They had not entirely recovered from this thrilling tale when Sarina remembered the other letter. She ran over to her mother and pulled it away from the hiding, slender fingers. "This one is from Firenze!" she exclaimed, noticing the postmark.

"Yes,—from Nello—and what do you suppose has happened!"

Of course you do know and could probably tell Sarina quite as well as Nello did, all about the wonderful arrival of the Cart, and the still more wonderful discovery of the two cousins and Maddalena. Old Lola, growing jealous and suspicious with age, sniffed scornfully when Maddalena was mentioned.

"Hui!" she said. "Hui! It will be a cold

day when she lands in Palermo, perhaps. Did any good ever come out of Lombardy?"

"Hush!" said Mamma Bice quite sternly. "If it had not been for her care and devotion where but dead and buried would those two poor boys be now?"

Babbo Beppo drew Sarina to him and put his arm gently about her. "Very exciting, is it not, piccina,—almost as exciting as the fighting up there in the north."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sarina, clasping her hands and pulling out Mara for a dance. "Is it going to be over? Will there ever be peace?"

"Soon—I think it may come, quite, quite soon——" and Babbo's eyes twinkled maliciously.

Old Lola was looking at him with great suspicion. She thought perhaps the good signore was a little in league with evil spirits, so often did he know what was going to happen beforehand. But then old Lola didn't and couldn't read the newspapers.

CHAPTER XVIII

JOURNEY'S END

ONE day early in November, up in the City of the Lily, the Fata Morgana might have been heard issuing very strict orders to the Little People on the Cart of Many Colors.

"You are not to object to anything," she commanded sternly. "Not that you have not behaved well. Indeed, I am quite proud of you. But once more you must suffer the horrid shrieks of trains and the whistle of boats, and once again will smoke and rude company spoil your beauty." This she said particularly for Angelica's benefit. She, poor Princess, had become as whiney as she was vain. "But with patience will come your reward, and soon."

All the Little People straightened up and listened intently.

"Soon?" repeated the Prince, rather timidly for a real Prince.

"I said, if patient, you should be rewarded." And then the Fata Morgana waved her wand and back they sprang to their stiff little places on the Cart.

The Fata Morgana spoke truly. For once again the Cart started off, and by careful timing arrived at Palermo even before Nello, old Maddalena and the two new cousins.

At last, the day came when the steamer was due. Down at the dock they were waiting,—that excited Famiglia Rossi, including Lola burning with curiosity to see Maddalena, and Sarina, of course, too thrilled to stay still one single minute. Slowly—endlessly long, it seemed—the steamer for which they were waiting appeared in the distance, and slowly, slowly came nearer and nearer. Sarina blew a little whistle one, two, three times. A minute later, upon the deck, they could see Nello's wildly

waving arms, and "He's as big as you are, Babbo!" shouted Sarina. Down the gang-plank he bounded, the first passenger off, and then followed such a meeting! Such kissings on this cheek and that, and how many times did they say it over, "How you have grown, Sarina!" "And you, Nello!" "And you!"

"And how much you will have to tell us!" this from Mamma Bice to Dolfino.

Babbo Beppo had happy tears in his eyes as he drew Cesare closely to him.

"My sister lives again in you. Yes, even death is not wholly cruel—or war—if in spite of them come reunitings like this."

Then they all piled into the tram and off and up to the Villino Verde. As they drew near to the house a great braying was heard out in the garden at the back of the Villino.

"Madonna Santissima!" cried Lola, hobbling to see the cause of this joyful noise.

Sarina and Nello clasped hands and jumped for joy.

"Why, of course! Don't you know? Gigi

has seen the Carretto and knows it is home again."

There indeed was Gigi, the little donkey, and there, in the shade of the old fig tree, was the Cart. Even its colors seemed brighter and fresher again in the brilliant clear air of that Sicilian day.

"Hark!" said Mamma Bice, stopping suddenly. Gigi, too, had stopped in the midst of a long-drawn bray, and down the road, first here, then there, everyone listening heard the sound of bells ringing, ringing, ringing. One moment of stillness, so still you could almost hear Angiolino, the baby, breathing—then, a shout from the boys—and in the distance what seemed like echoing shouts.

"It has been coming—coming!" said Babbo Beppo. "And now it has come!"

"What has come? The war is over, you say?" asked Lola of Maddalena in the hubbub.

"And how else could it be?" retorted Maddalena. "Were the Austrians not to be beaten

—were they not always *doomed* to be driven away forever?"

"Come!" interrupted Mamma Bice. "Up! Tonight we, too, will be contadini and off in our Carretto to see the Golden Shell celebrate the victory!"

"Che gioia! What joy!" cried everybody.

If only you could have seen the Golden Shell that night, all aglow with torches and strings of little oil lamps hung from window to window across the balconies! Like magic the lights sprang up on every street, and even down to the Marina. And out in the bay every sail had its outline written in golden lights against the clear, low sky. From hundreds of old chests people took their hangings of velvets and satins, and poorer, humbler fineries, and from the balconies they hung them and with flowers festooned the statues, while out over the water floated lovelier great flowers of light—fireworks that would have dazzled many a sleeping saint. Music of bands and shouts of happy people, booms of cannon, and bells all

ringing, ringing. People might be very poor and very miserable in the Golden Shell, but oh, how quickly they could forget, and with what merry words even the beggars asked for alms that night. I should never dare to tell you how long the Famiglia Rossi stayed out riding around the town, but then, if ever, was surely the time for turning night into day and for forgetting everything but just being happy and saying so.

On the Marina they stumbled upon old Jeli the Fisherman, wedged in comfortably in the slowly, amiably moving crowd. He beamed with delight as he saw the Cart and Nello.

"Ben tornato, Signorino! And God be thanked that the War did not last to swallow you up. And when will you paint another Cart? This one, truly!" and Jeli held up his hands to express his distress at the Cart's faded and battered condition.

"I rather think I shall never do another Carretto," said Nello. "Some day, maybe, I shall

paint something else that will make people say, 'He loves Italy.' "

"Evviva l'Italia!" shouted everybody.

Early the sun rose around Monte Pellegrino, and out of the sea the stretches of land showed one by one like fairy dwellings in an enchanted world. Not even the dawn quite wakened them—the Little People on the Cart of Many Colors. And the Fata Morgana cast upon them a spell of happy dreams. Were they not home again at last with peace and quiet all about them?

"I belong to the Old World," said the Fata Morgana to herself, half regretfully. "It's to be a brave and a new one now. But——" and she kissed her hand to the sun just gleaming up over the horizon. "In the heart of Italy I shall always be waiting, waiting and hoping to be found."

NOTES

NOTES

CHAPTER I

Evil Eye:—One of the superstitions still held by ignorant people that bad luck can be brought to any one by casting the evil eye on him—which is another way of saying "wishing him bad luck." A hunchback, for instance, is always sure to bring you bad luck unless you happen to see a white horse while seeing the hunchback. This turns the luck immediately from bad to good. To protect one's self from the evil eye all sorts of little charms are worn, from bits of coral to small and beautifully made ivory tusks and similar trinkets. If you can't afford these, the first and littlest fingers of the hands held straight, with those in between bent firmly, will serve you almost as well.

Bibite:—Drinks like lemonade, ginger ale, etc.

Nelluzzo:—An affectionate way of saying Nello.

CHAPTER II

Santa Rosalià:—The patron saint of Palermo, whose festa or holiday is celebrated on the fourth of September. The huge and rather too gorgeously

ornamented figure of the saint is taken in procession all about the city in a cart much painted and gilded. The saint's image is placed in a high open tower in the center of the cart and all day and all night the devout and the faithful among the populace make a pilgrimage to the saint's shrine up on Monte Pellegrino.

Loggia:—A gallery one or more stories high, usually at the front of a building. One side of the loggia, sometimes more, is open, with pillars framing the open spaces.

Piano nobile:—The first story above the basement. The term "nobile" is used because this story is considered the finest and grandest in any building.

Pergola:—An arbor or sort of balcony, often in Italy covered with rose vines or jasmine or other flowering vines.

Trinacria:—The emblem of Sicily—its old name. The emblem is a head in the center of three bent legs, representing the three pointed ends of the island.

CHAPTER III

Dates in Italy are always sold on the sprays on which they grow.

Contadini:—Peasants.

Gentilissima:—Most gracious lady.

Oleanders:—A large flowering shrub bearing pink or white blossoms not unlike large single roses.

Fiorino, Florin:—A gold coin first used in Florence in

the 13th Century. Called fiorino (little flower) because the coin bore the stamp of the Florentine lily.

Basilicù:—A pleasant spicy tasting herb.

Centesimino:—A centesimo is worth one-fifth of an American penny. Centesimino means the least little bit of money you can think of.

Sposina:—Little bride.

CHAPTER IV

Vendors in Palermo:—Men and women, and often young boys, who earn a rather uneven livelihood by selling all sorts of things on the street. The Palermo vendors are noted for the strange and often long, musical cries. Every kind of article is sold in this way, from flowers and household utensils to vegetables and fruits in season, not to mention various cooked foods, some of which are advertised with shrill, quite tragic cries.

Cassoni:—The Cassone or Wedding Chest has been for ages one of a bride's most necessary and valuable belongings. These chests are almost always made of wood and are often beautifully carved and painted in gold and color. In these chests a bride keeps her household linen and other treasures which she brings to her new home.

Betrothal ribbon:—When a young girl becomes engaged, she is at once presented with a fresh ribbon which she wears about her head constantly

until the day of her wedding, when she removes it to put on her bridal veil.

The Story on the Cart:—This is something about which you are to hear only the beginning in this chapter. Here you get acquainted with some of the characters whom Nello so successfully painted. Later you will discover still more about these Little People and their story. And before the book is ended, I promise that you shall know all that is most worth knowing of this Cart and the Stories it now keeps in hiding. Patience, then! I leave you to guess which chapter will unlock the mystery.

Cappella Palatina:—A very beautiful chapel built by the Normans in Palermo in the 12th Century. It is especially interesting because it shows in its quite small but perfect way the work of Norman and Saracen, in whose hands, at that time, the fortunes of Palermo were held.

Monreale:—Another very beautiful church built by the Normans in the 12th Century. It is famous for its wonderful mosaic work—pictures in small bits of stone, of brilliant and rich colors, intersected often with gold. The cloisters of Monreale are among the finest in the world.

CHAPTER V

Whistling St. George:—In Palermo, small boys' whistles are often made like tiny wooden images of

favorite saints or famous people. So you may blow a tune quite disrespectfully through the head of an Emperor or the toes of a holy friar.

Sicilian Toys and Games:—In Sicily children have, of course, their own childish sport, but their favorite play perhaps is some form of copying grown-up ceremonies. So they have little processions on the streets and dress their primitive dolls like diminutive saints, etc., and imitate quite stately affairs in a surprisingly real if small way.

Presepio Shepherds:—The Presepio is the Manger Scene done often very beautifully—now larger, now smaller—in the churches at Christmas time. The story of the Nativity is represented with every detail carefully worked out and images, often quite beautiful, of the Angels and Shepherds, the Holy Family and the Magi, and of course the ever-beloved Ox and Ass adoring the sacred Child.

Syracuse:—One of the most beautiful cities built by the Greeks in Sicily. Fragments of its old grandeur still remain but most of it is now only a lovely ruin.

Torti:—Little pastry cakes, often sold hot and with a most appetizing odor from the covered brazen trays which their vendors carry about from street to street.

Sirocco:—The wind which blows over from Africa for three days at a time, filling the air with dust and making the streets generally uncomfortable.

Terrazza:—A balcony.

Postino:—Postman.

Gnocchi:—A sort of round croquette made of corn meal dried and served with tomato sauce. Gnocchi are also made of potato. (Not so good!)

CHAPTER VI

Monte Morello:—A mountain not far from Florence, which is believed by the Florentines to indicate what the weather is to be. "Quando Monte Morello ha il capello prendi l'ombrello." "When Monte Morello has its cap on, take your umbrella."

Valley of the Arno:—One of the most fruitful parts of Tuscany, situated about the upper part of the Arno river.

Giotto's Tower:—The famous Campanile or belfry of the Cathedral of Florence. It was begun by the artist Giotto in 1334 and finished by Andrea Pisano.

The Ponte Vecchio:—One of the oldest and quaintest bridges in Europe. The present bridge was built over the Arno in 1345. And over the little shops which still line it on either side there used to be a series of terraces where one could walk or sit, on the roofs of the small buildings. The buildings are still happily there, but the "roof gardens" have become a gallery connecting the

two great picture galleries of the Uffizi and Pitti palaces.

Boboli Gardens:—These gardens belong to the Pitti palace and are noted for their fountains and grottoes and statues set amidst dark trees and in shady spots. They were begun some four or more hundred years ago.

Fiesole:—One of the oldest towns in Tuscany. It was famous both as an Etruscan and a Roman city. Part of the Etruscan wall is still standing and also an ancient theater. The little town is now visited chiefly for its beautiful situation, its fine, small Cathedral, and several ecclesiastical buildings.

The Mugnone:—A little stream which separates the valley of the Mugnone from a part of the City of Florence.

Otellino:—"Little Othello." The ending "ino" in Italian means "little" or "dear little."

Lorenzaccio:—"Big Lorenzo." The ending "accio" added to a name means "big." This ending sometimes means "rascally."

Piazza Signoria:—The chief public square in Florence. On it stand the Loggia dei Lanzi and the Palazzo Vecchio.

San Lorenzo:—The Church of San Lorenzo now stands where probably the first cathedral of Florence was built. The present church, large, dark, quiet and lovely within, was built during the 16th Century. Famous for many beautiful things which

it contains, the most famous is the Medici Chapel, where Michelangelo's statues of Lorenzo and Giuliano dei Medici are done so wonderfully that they seem to breathe and almost to speak.

Brunelleschi's Dome:—The dome of the Duomo of Florence was designed by Filippo Brunelleschi and was begun in 1421 and finished in thirteen years. It is almost ten feet higher than the dome of St. Peter's in Rome and was built in a way considered almost impossible at the time—without scaffolding. Every one ridiculed Brunelleschi's plans for the huge dome, but when it was finally finished it proved to be a perfect success and has been known ever since as Brunelleschi's Dome or La Cupola.

St. Zanobi, or *Zanobius,* who was made the first bishop of Florence in the year 376 A. D.

The Lancieri:—Lancers. The Lancers carry very tall pointed spears which glisten and make a brave showing on a bright day.

The Viale Margherita:—The viali or avenues of Florence are broad and fine streets laid out around the city on the ground on which its ancient walls encircled it. Of these walls only the entrance ways or "portas" now stand.

John of the Black Bands:—A celebrated warrior of the 16th Century. He was often called the Invincible. His troops were among the first infantrymen to win fame in Europe. They were so devoted to Giovanni that when he was killed

fighting at Mantua against the Spaniards, they put on mourning and ever after wore black. From this his title arose—"John of the Black Troops."

Bambini:—Children.

Mensola:—A small hamlet about half way between Florence and Settignano.

Diligence:—A small country bus.

Galileo's Tower:—This was the little observatory where the celebrated astronomer Galileo did most of his work. Here he constructed a telescope and a thermometer and made many valuable and original discoveries. When summoned by the Pope to deny the statements he had made about the earth's revolving about the sun, he was deprived of his liberty for quite a time and obliged to remain on his knees until he declared it was the sun and not the earth that moved. This he finally did, but it is said that even as he denied his discoveries to be true, he was heard to whisper "Eppui si muove—And yet it moves!" And Galileo was right! He was born in 1564 and lived to be seventy-two.

La bass' Italia:—"Lower" or southern Italy. This term unhappily is often used by Italians from other parts of Italy in a disagreeable sense, low meaning ignorant and uneducated.

Santa Maria Novella:—Visited and beloved for many treasures—for its painted walls, its famous "Green" and "Spanish" chapels, and cloisters.

Perhaps the most interesting thing to you in Santa Maria Novella would be the strange, stiff picture of the Madonna by Cimabue. Strange and stiff it would seem to you, but it was one of the first real paintings in Italy and the people of Florence admired it so much that when it was finished they carried it with banners and rejoicings to the church. Ever since then the street where Cimabue lived when he painted this picture has been called the Borgo Allegro or the Joyous Street.

Santa Croce:—One of the most famous and beautiful of old churches in Florence. Full of many things beautiful in themselves—statues, frescoes, and finely wrought wood-carving. It is of greatest interest as being a sort of shrine of great men. Here one may see the tombs and memorials to Michelangelo, Dante (who is buried in Ravenna), Garibaldi, Machiavelli the historian, and many others. Opening upon the small cloister is the chapel of the Pazzi family. To this chapel on Easter Even is brought the Car of the Pazzi full of fireworks, which are lighted by the artificial dove sent at noon of the same day from the Baptistery into the Cathedral. This strange and much beloved custom commemorates the story of an ancient member of the Pazzi family who was a Crusader and was said to have safely carried the sacred fire from Jerusalem to Florence.

The Baptistery:—Originally this was both the cathedral and baptistery of Florence. In old times

every child in Florence was baptized in this little round church. In the 15th Century there were added to it the three famous carved bronze doors done by the artist Ghiberti. These doors are covered with illustrations of holy tales so marvellously wrought in bronze that the great Michelangelo said of them that "they were worthy to be called the Gates of Paradise."

The Mercato:—The outdoor market so common to all Italian towns, where food and all sorts of wares are sold out in a piazza or on the street, for little money but with much talk!

Verrocchio's Courtyard:—The entrance courtyard to the Palazzo Vecchio. In its midst is a lovely fountain and in the center of this the statue of a small boy holding a dolphin. This statue was made by the artist Verrocchio and gives to the court its name.

Loggia dei Lanzi:—The old and famous sheltered meeting place for the rulers of Florence. It now serves chiefly as a beautiful background for a number of celebrated statues—and a comfortable lounging place for lazy people on hot summer days.

San Giovanni's Day:—The feast day of St. John, the "Protector" of Florence. Among many customs observed on this day in June to honor the saint, none is perhaps so beautiful as the illumination of the city. Many of the principal buildings and all of the bridges are outlined with lighted oil lamps

and against the darkness seem like fairy mansions set against the sky.

Venti Settembre:—The 20th of September, 1870. The day on which the victorious troops of Victor Emmanuel entered Rome, and the surrender of the Pope made possible Italy's unity.

San Miniato:—Old and small and very lovely, set on a hillside and surrounded by olive trees and almond orchards. San Miniato is one of the favorite—and forsaken—churches in Florence. It was built in 1013.

CHAPTER VIII

Prato:—A small but famous town near Florence.

Pisa:—One of Tuscany's most celebrated cities. Its cathedral is one of the oldest and finest in Italy, and the great belfry or Campanile belonging to it is always known as the Leaning Tower of Pisa, thanks to the strange way in which it leans away from its foundations instead of rising straight and stiff towards the sky.

Siena:—Next to Florence the most famous and important town in Tuscany.

Fonte-branda:—The most ancient of Siena's fountains, dating, some say, back to Roman days. Here the women of the neighborhood still come to do their washing—mingling the sound of splashing with the clatter of their jokes and gossip.

Mangia Tower:—The tall rose-colored tower that rises

high above the Municipal Palace of Siena. Built in the time of St. Catherine.

San Domenico:—The great church near which St. Catherine was born and where she was taken into the Dominican order of Sisters.

The Pope at Avignon:—At the time when St. Catherine lived, the Pope lived and ruled the church not in Rome, but at the small town of Avignon in France.

Contrada:—A ward of the city.

Festa:—Holiday.

Chi lo sa:—Who knows?

CHAPTER IX

Water and aniseed:—A favorite cooling drink.

The War with Tripoli:—Carried on for some years between Italy and Turkey. It ended in 1912.

Diavolina:—Little demon.

Distintissima:—Much respected lady.

Mille scuse:—A thousand pardons.

Pazienza:—Patience.

Ebbene:—Very well.

Bastimenti:—Ships.

CHAPTER X

Lorenzo Dei Medici:—The Medici family was one of the most powerful and important in Florence and in all Europe. Among the various celebrated members of the family, Lorenzo the Magnificent

was one of the greatest. A patron of the arts and a friend of scholars, he was also a devoted friend and playmate of his children.

Savonarola:—1452-1498. One of the most important religious reformers of Italy. He lived at the time of the great statesmen and artists of the Renaissance.

Tram:—Trolley-car.

Michelangelo:—1475-1564. Painter, sculptor, poet—a great heroic spirit. In the Pope's great palace of the Vatican at Rome, you may see the work of both Michelangelo and Raphael.

Dante and Beatrice:—The poet Dante Alighieri—born in Florence in 1265. He died an exile in Ravenna in 1321. His greatest work, the epic of the Divine Comedy, was written in honor of Beatrice Portinari, a beautiful and lovely Florentine lady, whom he had known in childhood and who died shortly after her marriage with Simone dei Bardi. Dante's two other most famous works are the Vita Nuova—New Life—and the Convito, or Banquet.

Salotto:—A parlor or small living room.

Saint Francis and Saint Claire:—St. Francis of Assisi—1182-1226—celebrated Italian monk and preacher. He founded the monastic order of the Franciscans. Some day you will read in the Little Flowers of St. Francis of how he preached to the birds, and other pleasant stories of his happy, saintly life.

St. Claire:—A friend of St. Francis. She founded the order of nuns among the Franciscans, and from her name it became known as the Clarisses.

Fra Angelico:—One of the most delightful and lovable of the early Renaissance painters of Florence.

Raphael:—Painter of Madonnas, portraits and frescoes. He lived at the time of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Befriended by the Pope and Princes, he gave to people of all classes the charm of old and classic tales, and the stories and faiths of the Christian Church.

Botticelli—Simonetta:—Sandro Botticelli—artist and friend of the great men of his day—especially of the Medici family. In more than one of his paintings he made forever celebrated the Bella Simonetta—the beautiful Simonetta—the betrothed of young Giulano dei Medici. In his later life Botticelli became a devoted follower of Savonarola.

CHAPTER XI

Saint Peter's:—The largest Roman Catholic Church in the world.

The Vatican:—The residence of the Pope, adjoining St. Peter's. This more than royal residence is also a great public museum filled with wonders of art belonging not only to the Renaissance, but to the Greek and Roman treasures discovered at that time. The term Renaissance means a rebirth, and is used to express the new life which de-

veloped in Europe after the long period just before the Middle Ages.

The Coliseum:—The huge, ruined arena of ancient Rome where, seated tier above tier, hundreds of Romans watched gladiatorial contests and celebrations of all kinds.

The Appian Way:—The most famous of many roads that led to Rome. It is even now bordered for a long way outside the city with ruins of notable buildings, and with monuments and tombs of the great days of the Roman Empire.

Savoia:—The name of the reigning house of the Kingdom of Italy.

The Four Villas:—Borghese, Frascati, Tivoli and the Villa Medici are four of Italy's most wonderful country places, lovely refuges of quiet and shade in the summer months.

San Marco:—In many respects the most beautiful cathedral in Italy. The great Basilica dates back to Byzantine days, and was finished in its present form in the 11th Century. In front of it stand four famous bronze horses.

Bridge of Sighs:—The covered bridge in Venice which connects the palace of the Doges with the prisons. Through two passages in it prisoners were taken for trial.

CHAPTER XVI

Carreggi:—A small settlement near Florence. Made famous because it was the site of one of Lorenzo

il Magnifico's most beautiful country residences. Many of the greatest men of Florence used to gather at Carreggi to discuss affairs of state and the problems of the artist and scholar. It was at Carreggi that Lorenzo dei Medici died.

Inglesi:—The English.

Half Wine:—The third and last wine drained from the grapes. This is mixed with an equal amount of water and used as soon as possible after the vintage.

Trentino:—Part of the Italian Tyrol. Its chief city is Trent, which is situated on the river Adige.

Pazzi:—Crazy.

Forestiere:—Foreigner.

Stupido:—Stupid.

Parenti:—Relatives.

Tenente:—Lieutenant.

Soldato:—Soldier.

Avanti:—Onward.

Podere:—Farm.

Lucia, The Padrona:—Lucia, the mistress of the farm.

CHAPTER XVII

Cecco Beppo:—The title given by the Italians to the Emperor of Austria.

Trieste:—An important seaport on the Adriatic. Held by Austria-Hungary as its principal seaport until the Great War of 1914-1918.